United Nations S/PV.5565

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5565th meeting

Saturday, 11 November 2006, 12 noon

New York

President:	Mr. Voto-Bernales	(Peru)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo	Mr. Ikouebe
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Mr. Christian
	Greece	Mrs. Telalian
	Japan	Mr. Shinyo
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Slovakia	Mr. Matulay
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Mahiga
	United States of America	Mr. Bolton

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

Letter dated 6 November 2006 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2006/868)

Letter dated 7 November 2006 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2006/869)

Letter dated 8 November 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2006/871)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

06-61238 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 12.20 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

Letter dated 6 November 2006 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2006/868)

Letter dated 7 November 2006 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2006/869)

Letter dated 8 November 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2006/871)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Pursuant to the decisions taken at the 5564th meeting, I invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to take a seat at the Council table.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Mansour (Palestine) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will continue its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2006/878, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Qatar.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I shall first call on those members that wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Bolton (United States of America): The draft resolution does not display an even-handed characterization of the recent events in Gaza, nor does it advance the cause of Israeli-Palestinian peace to which we aspire and for which we are working assiduously.

We join our fellow Council members in deeply regretting the injuries and loss of life on 8 November in and around Beit Hanoun. We note that the Israeli Government is conducting an investigation and has announced its intent to suspend all artillery fire into Gaza as a result. We hope that the investigation will be completed quickly and that appropriate steps will be taken to avoid a repetition of the tragedy.

First, we are disturbed at the language of the draft resolution that is, in many places, biased against Israel and politically motivated. Such language does not further the cause of peace, and its unacceptability to the United States in previous resolutions is well known.

Secondly, the draft resolution remains an unbalanced text. Among many such examples are the following. The preambular text equates Israeli military operations, which are legal, with the firing of rockets aimed at civilians into Israel, which is an act of terrorism. Moreover, its characterization of Israeli military actions as excessive and disproportionate constitutes a legal judgement that the Security Council would be ill-advised to make.

Thirdly, the proposed draft resolution calls for the establishment of a fact-finding mission, which is unnecessary and will do nothing to improve the situation on the ground. The draft resolution further promises to consider the establishment of an international mechanism for the protection of civilian populations — a promise which is unwise and unnecessary and, at any rate, raises false hopes.

At the same time, we are disturbed that there is neither a single reference to terrorism in the proposed draft resolution, nor any condemnation of the Hamas leadership's statement that Palestinians should resume terror attacks on a broad scale or of calls by the military wing of Hamas to Muslims worldwide to strike American targets and interests. More terror, whether directed at Israel, the United States or others, is not the solution, nor will it enable the Palestinian people to achieve their aspirations.

It is the responsibility of any Palestinian Authority Government to prevent terror and to take the

necessary steps to stop attacks and dismantle the terrorist infrastructure. Hamas has failed utterly in that regard by continuing to play a role in perpetuating instability and violence. The Palestinian people deserve leaders who are prepared to renounce terror, accept the Quartet principles, and become a legitimate partner in peace.

The United States remains committed to supporting a negotiated solution between Israelis and Palestinians. The road map and the principles contained therein remain the only agreed international basis upon which to move forward towards the two-State goal. We call upon all members of the international community to support the road map unequivocally. To that end, the United States will vote against the draft resolution.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): We shall now proceed to the voting.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Argentina, China, Congo, France, Ghana, Greece, Peru, Qatar, Russian Federation, United Republic of Tanzania.

Against:

United States of America.

Abstaining:

Denmark, Japan, Slovakia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The draft resolution received 10 votes in favour, 1 against and 4 abstentions. The draft resolution has not been adopted, owing to the negative vote of a permanent member of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom continues to be extremely concerned about the escalating crisis in Gaza and the toll it is taking on civilians. We are particularly disturbed about the consequences of Israeli military action, which tragically resulted in a large number of civilian Palestinian deaths in Beit Hanoun on 8 November. As the British Foreign Secretary said that day, it is hard to see what that action was meant to achieve and how it can be achieved. Once again, we extend our condolences to the families of those killed and injured.

We call on Israel to respect its obligation to avoid harming civilians. We call on Syria to use its influence constructively on Syrian-based Hamas leaders. And we call on the Palestinian leadership to bring an end to violence and to terrorist activities, including the firing of rockets into Israeli territory.

In this context, we welcome the recent call by President Abbas for an end to Qassam rocket fire. Reciprocal violence is in the interest of neither Israelis nor Palestinians and serves only to undermine the prospects for peace in the region.

What we have seen over the past few sad days further underlines the necessity of finding a comprehensive political solution to the current situation in Israel and the occupied territories. We continue to believe that the Road Map offers the best chance for a lasting peace. That should be one of our highest priorities.

As I said yesterday, it is absolutely right that the Security Council should meet on this important issue. The United Kingdom remains firmly of the view, however, that any statement from the Council must be balanced and must serve the interest of both parties, and that interest is peace.

We regret that negotiations did not lead to a text that the United Kingdom could support. We greatly appreciate the efforts of the sponsors to meet some of our concerns. But, in the end, we were not able to conclude that the draft resolution was sufficiently balanced, or that it reflected the complexity of the current situation. For this reason, the United Kingdom abstained from voting on the proposed text.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): Regrettably, Denmark was not in a position to support the draft resolution (S/2006/878) just considered. The draft resolution addresses issues of great concern to my Government. If it had included a more thorough recognition of the complexities on the ground, my delegation would have liked to vote in favour of the draft resolution.

Denmark remains very concerned about the latest developments on the ground. We were shocked to learn about the tragic event in Beit Hanoun that led to the death of 19 civilians, many of them children. We deplore the fact that the recent Israeli military

operations in Gaza have taken a heavy toll in civilian lives.

We have welcomed the Israeli recognition that the attack on Beit Hanoun on 8 November was a mistake and have urged the Israeli authorities to complete the announced inquiry promptly and to make the results public. The reality is that only an end to violence can pave the way for progress towards lasting peace. Rocket attacks from Palestinian territory into Israel must be condemned and must stop. At the same time, Israel must ensure that short-term measures aimed at improving the security situation of Israeli civilians are carried out in accordance with international law and do not hamper the achievement of a lasting solution to the conflict. In this regard, we have continuously stated that the exercise of a State's right to self-defence must be proportionate.

Mr. Shinyo (Japan): The Government of Japan deeply deplores the situation in Gaza, in which many Palestinian civilians have become victims during the recent Israeli military operations. We especially deplore the fact that more civilian lives were claimed on 8 November, in the shelling by the Israel Defense Forces of private houses in Beit Hanoun.

It is necessary for all parties concerned to exercise maximum restraint in order to avoid further aggravation of the situation. Japan strongly calls upon the Government of Israel, in particular, to avoid any action that may lead to further civilian casualties. We urge the Government of the Palestinian Authority to take appropriate measures to bring an immediate end to the violence by Palestinian extremist groups, including rocket attacks against Israel.

The deteriorating humanitarian situation among Palestinians is a matter of deep concern to our Government. Japan reiterates the importance for the international community of continuing to provide necessary assistance in order to address this situation. For our part, we have been steadily implementing our pledge of $25 million in humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, announced at the time of the visit of former Prime Minister Koizumi to Palestine in July. Japan will continue to cooperate with the international community in working to achieve the mitigation of tensions and the restoration of stability in the region.

It is necessary that any statement from the Council be balanced and that it carefully reflect the relevant aspects of the situation. The Government of Japan shares with the other Council members the view that the Council should act in unity and with all due haste to take appropriate action in the light of the tragic event in Beit Hanoun, which we consider unjustifiable.

Based on this recognition, Japan participated constructively in the discussions on the draft resolution proposed by the representative of Qatar. We highly appreciate the flexibility shown by our colleagues from Qatar, who endeavoured to reflect in the draft resolutions some of our concerns raised in the process of discussions. However, the Government of Japan believes that the text before us (S/2006/878) is not yet sufficiently balanced and that further discussion is needed. It is regrettable that the differences of opinion on a few points have not been successfully bridged. We therefore abstained in the voting.

Mr. Matulay (Slovakia): My delegation decided to abstain in the vote on the draft resolution on the situation in the Middle East (S/2006/878) as it stands before the Security Council today.

Slovakia has expressed its deep concern at the increased violence that has recently been taking place in Gaza, and especially at the Israeli military operations that have resulted in the death or injury of dozens of Palestinian civilians, including children and women, in Beit Hanoun. We express our deepest condolences to the Palestinian people and to the bereaved families. We strongly deplore any action that causes such appalling civilian casualties and call on Israel to undertake serious efforts to investigate this tragic event.

We believe that all the initiatives of the Security Council in the wider area of the Middle East are very important and have a direct impact on the situation and on future developments. In that sense, any action taken by the Security Council should be considered very carefully, with the aim of making a balanced appeal to all parties and of achieving a just and lasting peace.

In the process of drafting this draft resolution, many comments and suggestions to improve and balance the text were made by all Council members. The text as it stands before us reflects most of the views expressed during the deliberations. However, as we said earlier, during the expert consultations, we had wished for the inclusion of additional relevant adjustments and modifications that would have reflected all the complexities of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian dispute in a more accurate way. After

careful consideration, we regretfully decided to abstain in the vote on the draft text as it was submitted to the Security Council.

Mr. Ikouebe (Congo) (*spoke in French*): I waited to hear the outcome before asking to speak, because my delegation is not accustomed to explain its vote here, particularly when it is a positive vote. But after what has just taken place, I cannot fail to convey to the Council how troubled my delegation is and to express my deep disappointment.

If this is the response of this Council to the crimes that have just been committed, then it clearly constitutes an insult to the memory of the victims. If we are not able to make a clear statement on such a serious situation — which is repeated regularly and with complete impunity — it will subsequently be very difficult to try to include delegations like my own in decision-making here, which is often contentious and unilateral, on issues that are sometimes less worrying and less urgent for the international community.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is well known that, owing to its sense of responsibility with respect to the Palestinian cause, Qatar submitted a balanced draft resolution (S/2006/878) reflecting the views of the majority of Security Council members. In the draft resolution we took account of comments from all States, but the Security Council was nonetheless unable to adopt that balanced text, for reasons with which we are all familiar. We will leave it to peace-loving peoples and States to assess the objectivity that this reflects.

On many occasions we have done nothing to protect Palestinian civilians, who desperately need assistance and support from the international community. A halfhearted response from the Security Council gives the impression that we are shirking our humanitarian responsibility to protect lives, in particular the lives of innocent children and women and of others who are vulnerable. The image of innocent unarmed civilians killed mercilessly at Beit Hanoun will remain etched in our memories and in the memories of all peace-loving peoples.

We must put an end to these massive and flagrant violations of humanitarian law. The Security Council's failure today to do its duty with respect to the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territories by putting an end to Israeli aggression will lead to the continuation of Israel's aggre ion and of the cycle of violence. The Council's inability to intervene and put an end to the already grave situation in the occupied Palestinian territories will not only result in an escalation of this long-standing conflict but will call into question the credibility of the Security Council with regard to the implementation of the provisions of international law.

Peace-loving, innocent people and victims of war continue to hope that the Security Council will shoulder its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Will the day come when the Security Council and the countries concerned take a firm stand in the face of aggression and oppression against the Palestinian people?

I wish in conclusion to thank all the Council members that voted in favour of the draft resolution.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): I want at the outset to thank those who voted in favour of this balanced draft resolution (S/2006/878). We thank Qatar, the Arab Group, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement, which unanimously asked for the convening of a Security Council meeting and sponsored the draft resolution. We are disappointed that the draft resolution was not adopted. Palestine has been disappointed again.

The Security Council today has conveyed two wrong messages. It has conveyed to Israel that it can continue to behave as though it were above international law. It has conveyed to the Palestinian people that, with regard to their issue, the Security Council is not dealing with justice in the proper way.

But our people, in spite of this disappointment, will never lose hope. Justice will prevail. Occupation will eventually come to an end. This aggression, which has been continuing in Gaza for the past five months, has not broken the will of our people and will never do so. Only through negotiations — not massacres and aggression — will we be able to move forward to find a just solution to this conflict.

As our nation commemorates today the second anniversary of the death of our historic leader, Yasser Arafat, we are committed more than ever to accomplishing our national objectives. Our President, Mahmoud Abbas, stated today in Ramallah, at the second-anniversary commemoration of the death of

President Arafat, that we are committed to the two-State solution. One has been in existence since 1948; ours needs to be established in all the area occupied by Israel in June 1967, including East Jerusalem, with a just solution to the Palestinian refugee issue, based on General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

We will never lose faith in the great principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Our belief in the United Nations, including the Security Council, will never weaken. We will continue to come to the Council and other bodies of the United Nations system until justice prevails.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5566

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5566th meeting

Thursday, 16 November 2006, 12.05 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Voto-Bernales	(Peru)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Martínez Gramuglia
	China	Mr. Li Kexin
	Congo	Mr. Ikouebe
	Denmark	Mr. Christensen
	France	Mrs. Collet
	Ghana	Mr. Christian
	Greece	Mrs. Papadopoulou
	Japan	Mr. Shinyo
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Qahtani
	Russian Federation	Mr. Leplinskiy
	Slovakia	Mr. Matulay
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Manongi
	United States of America	Mr. Brencick

Agenda

The situation in the Great Lakes region

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06-61854 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 12.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Great Lakes region

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Uganda, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Butagira (Uganda) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/2006/861, which contains the text of a letter dated 3 November 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council.

Following consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council.

"The Security Council welcomes efforts aimed at bringing an end to the long-running conflict in northern Uganda, and is following closely the Juba talks process between the Government of the Republic of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The conflict with the LRA has caused the displacement of up to 2 million people and the death of about 100,000 people in the region, as well as leading to the death of eight United Nations peacekeepers.

"The Security Council welcomes the cessation of hostilities which took effect on 29 August 2006, and was renewed on 1 November 2006, and stresses the importance, for peace and stability in the region, of both parties respecting that cessation of hostilities. The Security Council commends the Government of Southern Sudan for facilitating this agreement, and for its efforts to further a long-term and peaceful solution to the conflict, and calls on all parties to commit themselves fully to this end.

"The Security Council demands that the LRA immediately release all women, children and other non-combatants, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) on children and armed conflict, and that the peace process be concluded expeditiously.

"The Security Council will continue to monitor developments closely. It invites United Nations Member States to support efforts to bring an end to this conflict so that peace and security can be restored to the region and the rule of law re-established, and to ensure that those responsible for serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law are brought to justice.

"The Security Council welcomes the briefing provided by the Secretariat on 7 November 2006, which it will consider further, in particular in light of progress in the Juba talks process. It recalls the briefing provided on 19 April 2006 by the Ugandan Foreign and Defence Ministers, the visit to Uganda of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict in June 2006, and the briefings by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs on northern Uganda on 20 April and 15 September 2006.

"The Security Council welcomes the announcement by the Government of Uganda of the establishment of a Joint Monitoring Committee to oversee the delivery of a prioritized Emergency Action Plan to tackle the humanitarian issues in northern Uganda, looks forward to further progress on improving the living conditions for civilians in northern Uganda, measurable against clear benchmarks, and urges Member States to maintain their support to these efforts. It also welcomes the Government of Uganda's work so far on its

Peace, Recovery and Development Plan to address the long-term needs of the region."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2006/45.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5567

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5567th meeting

Tuesday, 21 November 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Voto-Bernales	(Peru)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. García Moritán
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo	Mr. Ikouebe
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Ghana	Mr. Yankey
	Greece	Mrs. Papadopoulou
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Shcherbak
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Thompson
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Manongi
	United States of America	Mr. Bolton

Agenda

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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06-62381 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, Germany and Italy in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Prica (Bosnia and Herzegovina) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2006/900, which contains the text of a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations.

I wish to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/2006/810, containing a letter dated 12 October 2006 from the Secretary-General transmitting the thirtieth report on the implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I also wish to draw attention to document S/2006/809, containing a letter dated 12 October 2006 from the Secretary-General, transmitting the seventh report on the activities of the European Union military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Argentina, China, Congo, Denmark, France, Ghana, Greece, Japan, Peru, Qatar, Russian Federation, Slovakia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1722 (2006).

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 10.15 a.m.

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United Nations S/PV.5568

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5568th meeting

Tuesday, 21 November 2006, 10.20 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Voto-Bernales	(Peru)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo	Mr. Ikouebe
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Mr. Yankey
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Manongi
	United States of America	Ms. Wolcott Sanders

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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06-62387 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Cuba, Finland, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Israel, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Gillerman (Israel) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 20 November 2006 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, which will be issued as document S/2006/904 and which reads as follows.

> "I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the meeting of the Security Council being held on Tuesday, 21 November 2006, regarding the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the Council's provisional rules of procedure and previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Mansour (Palestine) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

The Security Council will now hear a briefing by Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Gambari: This past month, we have witnessed an alarming escalation in violence between the Israelis and the Palestinians, as well as political developments in Israel, the occupied Palestinian territory and Lebanon, almost all of which have a negative impact on the prospects for peace and stability in the region.

There have been intense confrontations between the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and Palestinian militants, as the IDF's rolling military operation in Gaza enters its sixth month. The operation is aimed at curbing the launching of rockets by Palestinian militants against Israeli civilian targets. The Council has already been briefed on the tragic events in Beit Hanoun, in which a week-long Israeli incursion included an artillery attack that killed more than 20 Palestinian civilians. In addition to the high number of human casualties, the IDF operation in Beit Hanoun resulted in an estimated $3.7 million in damage to local infrastructure, according to United Nations Development Programme figures. As the Council is aware, the General Assembly, meeting in emergency special session, adopted a resolution on Beit Hanoun (General Assembly resolution ES-10/16), which includes a request for the Secretary-General to send a fact-finding mission and report back in 30 days.

In the West Bank and Gaza, a combined total of at least 128 Palestinians were killed and over 380 were injured during the past month, including at least 19 children. One Israeli soldier and one civilian were killed, and many injuries were reported.

Palestinian militants fired over 200 rockets and mortars this month into the western Negev region,

including several that struck just as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, was visiting Sderot earlier today. The rockets have caused one death, multiple injuries and significant damage. Schools in the area have been closed intermittently since October. The town of Sderot, in particular, has borne the brunt of these indiscriminate attacks. Israel also expressed concern that weapons and explosives continue to be smuggled into Gaza, enabling militants to continue and possibly intensify their attacks against Israeli targets.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has continued negotiations on a national unity government with Hamas and other Palestinian factions, and there now appears to be an understanding in principle on the elements for the composition and programme of a new government. Prime Minister Haniyeh announced on 10 November that he would be ready to step down as Prime Minister in order to "let the siege be lifted to end the suffering of the Palestinian people". President Abbas also met with representatives of Palestinian factions yesterday with the aim of establishing a cessation of militant attacks against Israeli targets, in exchange for a cessation of attacks by Israel.

Despite the reported progress, announcement of a full agreement on the government is not necessarily imminent. Negotiations encompass a number of outstanding issues, including the release of the Israeli soldier who remains captive in Gaza. The official nomination of the next Palestinian prime minister is expected to occur only if and when the entire agreement is concluded.

The Palestinian Authority's unprecedented fiscal crisis looms in the background of these political negotiations. The Palestinian Authority received only $500 million between March and September, which amounts to only 40 per cent of its revenues for the same period last year. The wage bill has continued to increase, as has net lending, reflecting non-payment of bills by consumers. Palestinian Authority revenues have fallen mainly because Israel refuses to hand over indirect taxes it collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, amounting to approximately half a billion dollars.

The fiscal crisis has contributed to a serious decline in the delivery of public services. A large majority of public schools in the West Bank remain closed, and West Bank public health facilities offer only emergency treatment, chemotherapy and dialysis. Stocks of essential drugs and medical disposables throughout the occupied Palestinian territory have been depleted, and health centres in Gaza have been hampered by electricity shortages.

Turning to Israeli political developments, Prime Minister Olmert moved to strengthen his coalition at the end of October by including the Israel Our Home party in the Government and by appointing Avigdor Lieberman, the party's Chairman, as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister in charge of Strategic Affairs. This appointment has caused concern in the peace camp in Israel and alarm among Palestinians.

Prime Minister Olmert visited the United States this month and held talks with Administration officials in Washington on a number of issues, including, of course, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Regarding movement and access, I would like to observe that one year ago, on 15 November, the Agreement on Movement and Access was concluded. Implementation of that Agreement, intended to promote peaceful economic development and to improve the situation in the Gaza Strip, has been limited. Despite the stationing of European Union (EU) observers, the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt has been open for only 58 per cent of scheduled opening hours over the past year and for only 9 per cent of the scheduled time since June of this year. The Karni crossing has been open for only 44 per cent of scheduled opening hours, with opening hours changing on an almost daily basis.

Gaza export targets, which the Agreement had set at 150 trucks per day by end of 2005, rising to 400 trucks per day by end of 2006, remain just that: targets. Over the past year, Palestinians have been allowed to export on average only 18 truckloads of produce per day, a small fraction of even the lower of the two targets. It should be noted here that the targets were calculated on the basis of minimum export levels needed to prevent the further decline of the Palestinian economy and suffering of the population.

No Palestinian worker has been allowed to cross at Erez to access jobs in Israel since March 2006, and no progress has been reported on bus or truck convoys between Gaza and the West Bank. Similarly, there has been no progress reported on plans to rebuild the seaport and the airport. One year after signing the agreement, the Government of Israel still has not

presented its plan to reduce internal closure measures inside the West Bank. In fact, the number of obstacles has increased from 400 one year ago to 542 today, many of these manned by soldiers.

This month, the Israeli press reported that the Government of Israel and the Settlers Council had agreed on a plan to evacuate 15 illegal outposts, partially evacuate four and legalize eight. However, that report has not received official confirmation. An official denial would help to dispel any lingering impression that the Government plans to sanction the establishment of a further eight settlements in contravention of previous agreements. Despite the stated intention of the Government to evacuate outposts in accordance with the Road Map, no action has been taken to date in that regard. The lack of action to freeze settlement activities in response to repeated Quartet appeals is a matter of serious concern. Moreover, it has a direct and far-reaching impact on movement and access: many of the impediments to Palestinian movement in the West Bank exist primarily to provide security for illegal settlements as opposed to monitoring movement into Israel proper.

Israel also continued construction on the barrier. The Secretary-General's report (A/ES-10/361) on the establishment of a register of damage related to Israel's construction of the wall was submitted to the General Assembly on 17 October. The report presents the institutional framework required for the register of damage, the establishment of which was requested by the General Assembly.

I now turn to developments in Lebanon. The political and security situation in Lebanon continues to deteriorate. Earlier today, Pierre Gemayel, Lebanon's Minister of Industry and one of the leaders of the 14 March coalition, was killed by gunmen, who opened fire as his convoy drove through a Christian neighbourhood near Beirut. This assassination occurred in the midst of an increasingly complex political environment. From 6 to 11 November, Lebanese political leaders engaged in a process of national consultations initiated by the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, Nabih Berri. In four sessions, the leaders discussed critical issues facing the country but could not, unfortunately, reach a consensus. This led, several days later, to the resignation from the Government of five Shia ministers and one Christian minister.

In our view, and with the threat of even greater violence looming over Lebanon's political horizon, it is imperative that the parties do their utmost to work together for Lebanon to make progress towards the important political and socio-economic objectives and challenges that lie ahead. To this end, the Secretary-General's Personal Representative for Lebanon, Geir Pedersen, continues to encourage all the parties to return to the negotiating table with the aim of finding a consensus.

The cessation of hostilities with Israel continues to hold, with no major violations of the Blue Line. However, almost daily and often provocative Israeli overflights over Lebanon, including mock attacks on United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) troops, continue, despite repeated United Nations calls for an end to these violations.

The IDF has withdrawn from the areas surrounding the village of Ghajar. The tripartite meetings between the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), the IDF and UNIFIL continued to provide a constructive forum, inter alia on the situation pertaining to the village of Ghajar, and all sides remain optimistic that finalization of the temporary security arrangement for Ghajar can be achieved in the near future. A more detailed report on progress in the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) will, of course, be provided by the Secretary-General to the Council on 30 November.

On 15 November, the Secretary-General presented to the Security Council his report on the establishment of a tribunal of an international character pursuant to resolution 1664 (2006). In that regard, the Legal Counsel, Mr. Nicolas Michel, addressed the Council only yesterday.

We have seen another month of violence in the Middle East, one that, for the tragedy at Beit Hanoun, will almost certainly be remembered as a dark hour in this very protracted and tragic conflict. Again, civilians on both sides have suffered as a result of the conflict. Palestinians are mourning the loss or injury of more than 240 friends and relatives in Beit Hanoun, which was devastated by repeated Israeli incursions. Only a few kilometres away, in the Israeli town of Sderot, Israelis are grieving the death of one person and the injury of 14 others who were hit by Palestinian rocket fire.

The events of this month highlight once again the fact that this conflict cannot be resolved through military means. Once again, we fully acknowledge Israel's right to self-defence, as long as it is exercised in accordance with international law. However, the incursions into Beit Hanoun produced a huge number of non-combatant deaths, revealing a manifestly excessive use of force. Moreover, there was a subsequent increase in rocket fire into Israel, even though the stated purpose of the operation was to stop such attacks. Such actions and counteractions intensify anger against Israel, both among Palestinians and throughout the Middle East. They exacerbate existing resentment over the continued occupation, with apparently no end in sight. In the light of these results, it is hard to see the effectiveness of such operations. Palestinian rocket fire, which is legally and morally wrong, is also counterproductive. The occupation of Palestinian territory that began in 1967 will not be brought to an end through indiscriminate attacks against Israeli civilians.

It is of critical importance to return to the political track. Israelis and Palestinians both need to receive reassurance that the prospect of actually solving the conflict is not dead. New initiatives from the international community are taking shape, and a reinvigorated third party intervention may help to push the parties to move beyond the current impasse. The Secretary-General fervently hopes that the Quartet will take concrete steps — and take them soon — to promote a return to negotiations.

At this moment, however, it is difficult to see a breakthrough without the establishment of a new Palestinian government that puts the Palestinian Authority as a whole in a position to better address the needs of the people, to fully engage with the international community, to ensure the release of the Israeli soldier currently held captive in Gaza and to maintain a cease-fire. The establishment of such a government as a culmination of President Abbas's efforts is a worthy goal in itself.

Movement in the right direction should be encouraged by the international community and rewarded when it occurs. The United Nations, therefore, continues to encourage the efforts of President Abbas to establish a Palestinian government whose political programme reflects the basic tenets of the peace process, as the Quartet agreed on 20 September. Formation of such a government would also help lift the restrictions on donor funding to its institutions, which is crucial, given the gravity of the Palestinian Authority's fiscal crisis.

Israel, for its part, must also act responsibly to calm the situation and bring about conditions in which negotiations can resume. Israel should act prudently and proportionally in defending its citizens, so as to avoid civilian casualties. Operating with area weapons like artillery in civilian neighbourhoods such as Beit Hanoun makes civilian casualties inevitable. A review of the entire policy of military pressure may well be in order. Israel should also meet its agreements and obligations, establishing a clear timeline and method for dismantling settlement outposts, as set out in the Road Map, and transferring value added tax and customs revenues that it collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority. The absence of such transfers is depriving Palestinian Authority civil servants of their salaries and hurting close to a million dependents, as well as weakening the Palestinian Authority institutions on which a Palestinian State is meant to be based.

Furthermore, progress on the regional peace track is also necessary to stabilize an increasingly volatile situation in the Middle East. The Syrian role is crucial in a number of areas, and we continue to hope that international initiatives to encourage a more positive role will, in fact, bear fruit. We also continue to hope that adversaries within the region will begin talking to resolve their differences. Any and all opportunities for dialogue, however difficult, should be explored.

Finally, I believe that the inspiration for peace must come from somewhere, and where better than from those Israelis and those Palestinians who have been hurt the most by this prolonged conflict. Statements from victims on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian divide suggest that there is a growing fatigue with the current state of affairs and a desire to progress towards a solution, rather than continuing to engage in a never-ending cycle of punishment and revenge.

We hope that, with the assistance of the international community, Israeli, Palestinian and other regional leaders will be able to achieve such progress before the end of this year. Certainly, the people of the region deserve no less.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Gambari for the information that he has provided to us.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): Before delivering my written statement, I would like to convey, on behalf of the Palestinian people and the Palestinian leadership, our deepest condolences to the Gemayel family and to the Government and the people of Lebanon on the tragic crime that was committed this morning in Lebanon. We are confident that the sisterly nation of Lebanon is strong enough to withstand this crime and to move ahead towards a bright future for the great people of Lebanon. I also want to thank Mr. Gambari for his briefing.

Ten days ago, we met in this Chamber in the hope that the Council would take a swift and determined stance to address the grave situation occurring in the occupied Palestinian territory, in particular the condemnable massacre that took place in Beit Hanoun on 8 November 2006. Like many other times prior to this tragic incident, we had hoped that the Security Council would shoulder its responsibilities and undertake the necessary action to remedy the grave situation to which the entire world was bearing witness. Yet, once again, not only were we let down, but the individuals who lost family members and the victims themselves have also been let down.

Even for the people of Gaza — a people who have been forced to endure the insurmountable grief of death and destruction — the loss in Beit Hanoun was too great to bear. Loads of ambulances lined up, carrying the unrecognizable and mutilated bodies of 16 members of the same extended family, the majority of whom were women and children, all of whom were civilians. The total number of those killed in the Beit Hanoun massacre, a civilian-populated neighbourhood, rose to 19, thus adding to the over 82 others killed earlier in the same Israeli military aggression, which centred mainly on Beit Hanoun. Moreover, the overall count of Palestinians killed since last June in the wider military aggression carried out in Gaza now numbers over 450.

It should be highlighted that, after the inaction by the Security Council, Israel, the occupying Power, continued its aggression against the captive civilian population, including through air strikes on the Gaza Strip. This resulted in the killing of more Palestinians, including a 15-year-old boy and a 20-year-old. Furthermore, the Israeli occupying forces also continued to carry out incursions into the occupied West Bank, killing and wounding several civilians. In fact, the latest Israeli crimes occurred today, 21 November 2006, and yesterday, 20 November, in the West Bank town of Qalqilya when the Israeli occupying forces carried out yet another extrajudicial execution, killing two Palestinians they had illegally targeted, as well as six innocent bystanders.

The inaction of the Security Council, which was specifically due to a veto by one permanent member, led us to the resumption of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, in accordance with the Uniting for Peace formula. We had hoped that Member States would collectively undertake what the Security Council had been unable to do. Indeed, the international community took up the reins of responsibility and voted nearly unanimously in favour of a draft resolution which was practically identical to the one put before the Council.

We thank the entire international community that voted in that manner. Out of the 169 present for the voting, 156 voted in favour of the resolution (General Assembly resolution ES-10/16), sending a loud and clear message to the parties. Those 156 countries cannot be hijacked. One should respect the integrity of the entire collective voting of the Non-Aligned Movement, the entire collective voting of the European Union, the entire collective voting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the entire collective voting of all of the countries in South America, the entire collective voting of the Arab League of nations, and the votes of other nations in Asia.

As for the Israeli side, the resolution called for an end to its military aggression, which endangers the Palestinian civilian population. Of course, in the resolution there are obligations on both sides, but, as an occupying Power, Israel is ultimately obliged to ensure the safety and well-being of the Palestinian people it holds hostage in its 39-year-old occupation; this is an obligation it has continued to ignore in the most violent and brutal manner.

It should be mentioned that this is not the first time that the Security Council has failed to uphold its responsibilities, despite the fact that since 1967 the Council has adopted more than 40 resolutions

specifically on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. One of the main problems is that the Council has been unable to take the actions necessary for implementation of those resolutions, and thus for bringing about compliance by Israel, the occupying Power, with its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law.

In that regard, Israel's policies and practices against the Palestinian people, who have been under its occupation since 1967, have included not only systematic human rights violations, but acts constituting grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention, under its article 147 — that is, war crimes, which are carried out with complete impunity. That has not only aggravated the situation by failing to bring about an end to the violations — including an end to Israel's belligerent military occupation itself — but has also prolonged a conflict that has caused so much suffering, loss and hardship for the Palestinian people, as well as for the entire region.

To be fair, this is not due to a failure of the membership in its entirety; rather, it is due mainly to one permanent member, which has consistently prevented the Council from taking serious action, has provided the occupying Power with unjustified diplomatic protection and has actively tried to neutralize and contradict international law. The consequences of that behaviour have been extremely detrimental, not only in terms of the rights of the Palestinian people, but also in terms of the international system and its authority and credibility. That pattern of behaviour has undermined the rule of law and deepened doubt regarding the Security Council and the United Nations itself, sending the wrong message to Israel, the occupying Power, which has continued to act as if it were above the law.

The situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, continues to deteriorate dramatically and the toll of death and destruction continues to rise as a result of the aggression being carried out by the Israeli occupying forces against the Palestinian people. We continue to reaffirm that it is incumbent upon the international community to address this crisis. We have continued since September 2000 to reiterate our calls for amelioration of the suffering caused to the Palestinian people as a result of the ongoing and escalating flagrant violation of their human rights as defined by international humanitarian law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Unfortunately, those calls have fallen upon deaf ears. Consequently, since that time, more than 4,300 Palestinians, including many children, have been killed. In addition, tens of thousands have been injured, many of whom have been permanently disabled as a result of the serious injuries sustained. The Israeli occupying forces have also committed themselves to continuing with their crimes of extrajudicial killings; the destruction of homes, buildings, agricultural fields, roads and other infrastructure; the confiscation of more land for illegal settlement activities and for Israel's expansionist wall; and the destruction of Palestinian institutions. At the same time, the Israeli occupying forces have tightened their military siege and their restrictions on the freedom of movement of all Palestinian persons and goods, virtually dividing the occupied Palestinian territory into several detention centres.

Despite the aforementioned, the Palestinian side remains committed to finding a peaceful solution through diplomatic means. The Palestinian side — in particular President Mahmoud Abbas — is actively engaged in formulating a national unity government, efforts which will soon come to fruition.

Moreover, others have spoken in the same vein about the importance of finding a diplomatic solution. In that regard, three countries of the European Union, namely France, Italy and Spain, have unveiled a Middle East peace plan amid the frustration over the latest developments between the Israeli and Palestinian sides. We welcome that initiative, which includes, among other things, an immediate ceasefire in the region, a Palestinian national unity government and talks between Israel's Prime Minister and the Palestinian President, plus an exchange of prisoners between the two parties, an international mission in Gaza to monitor a ceasefire and the convening of an international peace conference on the conflict in the Middle East. As the Prime Minister of Spain correctly pointed out,

> "We cannot remain impassive in the face of the horror that continues to unfold before our eyes. Violence has reached a level of deterioration that requires determined, urgent action by the international community."

Even some on the Israeli side are calling for a diplomatic solution. In that connection, senior Israeli ministers — including, among others, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, Vice Premier Shimon Peres and Defence Minister Amir Peretz — have all called on Prime Minister Olmert to initiate a plan to break the diplomatic impasse with the Palestinian Authority, including calls for an immediate ceasefire. After a telephone call between Mr. Peretz and President Abbas yesterday, it was clear that they had agreed that an immediate and mutual ceasefire was needed.

However, it seems that the Israeli Prime Minister would rather ignore them as he continues to pursue his illegal policies and practices. According to Israeli news reports, Mr. Peretz told Mr. Olmert, "I am not a minister of assassinations", referring to the policy of targeted killings. He continued, "I am the head of the peace camp. I need to talk about a ceasefire. I am not only responsible for the intensity of the fire."

It is high time that Israel, the occupying Power, and the Security Council heed not only the calls of the international community, especially the General Assembly, but the calls among its own, to prevent further massacres and tragedies from occurring.

It is never too late for mistakes of the past to be rectified. In that regard, we assert our hope that the Security Council will soon assume its rightful and proper role and use its authority to address this issue. That can be done only by ending the grave breaches being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, and by bringing an end to the hostilities and salvaging the prospects for reaching a peaceful settlement on the basis of international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Quartet Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative adopted in Beirut in March 2002. The Palestinian people hope that the next time we are forced to return to the Security Council, it will finally uphold its duties and responsibilities and thus save us all from the tragedy of more death, destruction and misery.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Permanent Observer of Palestine for his statement.

I now call on the representative of Israel.

Mr. Gillerman (Israel): Let me start by thanking you and congratulating you on your very able leadership of the Security Council during this month. We know that you have not been doing this for long, but you are doing it professionally and as a great veteran. We thank you. I would also like to thank Mr. Gambari for his informative and concise report.

I would like to start by expressing the condolences and sorrow of the people of Israel to the people of Lebanon for the death of another member of the Gemayel family, which has paid, over the years, so dearly for its moderation, pluralism and liberalism. This death is just another sign of how extremism and fundamentalism are taking their toll in our very, very tough neighbourhood, and how the Lebanese people as a whole and that particular family in particular are paying a high price.

We all know from where that extremism stems, we all know whose fingerprints are so apparent in this pattern of assassinations. We wait for the day when moderation and common sense will prevail in Lebanon as well as in our region as a whole.

We are today discussing the situation in the Middle East. I beg to share with the Council my feeling that, however precise the Under-Secretary's reports are and have been in the past and however many debates we have about the situation in the Middle East, the real situation in the Middle East was made manifest to us today in that horrible assassination.

The real situation in the Middle East is the situation on the ground. It is the situation where the Gemayel family is paying the highest price for moderation. It is the admission, today yet again by Hizbollah, that it is being funded by Iran, that sponsor of terror and master of evil. It is the continuous shelling of Israeli cities by Qassam rockets, killing and maiming innocent civilians.

And yet — and yes, sadly — it is also the plight and pain of the Palestinian people, held hostage by a terrorist Government.

This, Mr. President, is indeed the situation in the Middle East. And all of this can be changed overnight. It can in fact stop right now, as we speak. All that has to happen is, first, that Iran and Syria relinquish terror and stop generating it throughout our region. Secondly, Hamas must accept the three demands of the international community as expressed by the Quartet and this Council. Thirdly, the Hamas-led Palestinian Government must immediately stop firing Qassam rockets into Israel. Fourthly, our boys, Gilad Shalit,

Udi Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, must be released immediately.

All this can end right now, in one second. But it cannot end as the result of speeches here or biased resolutions in the General Assembly. It cannot end even as the result of lectures from that great bastion of democracy and the rule of law, the terror Government of the Palestinian Authority.

It is a decision that only the Palestinian people can take and only the parties can resolve. The choice is clear and the end can be very near. We sincerely hope that, for once, our neighbours will make the right choice. If they do, they will be surprised by how far Israel will be willing to go together with them in order to secure the reality of the peace and prosperity of two States living side by side in this war-torn, bloodshed-ridden region that yearns for peace and has demonstrated yet again today why it needs it so badly.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his sobering briefing and for the commitment he displays with respect to this vital issue.

I speak just after the shocking news of the assassination of Industry Minister Pierre Gemayel in Lebanon. We condemn the assassination. It is evidently the act of those with no concern for Lebanon's interests or the interests of a wider Middle East peace. No one gains in the long term by deplorable and senseless actions of this sort. We call on all parties to refrain from acts of violence and for all those with influence over the extremists, inside and outside Lebanon, to exercise it in the cause of peace.

The United Kingdom remains fully committed to a Middle East peace process. It is one of the highest priorities we face. The British Prime Minister has repeatedly made clear that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is at the heart of the challenges faced by the region. Therefore, a solution to that conflict must be at the core of our response to those challenges. We all need to work towards a two State solution: on the one hand, an independent, viable Palestinian State, and on the other, a safe and secure Israel, living side by side in peace and security and as equals.

My Foreign Secretary has been discussing the way forward with Foreign Minister Livni in London today. We hope that there will soon be a Palestinian Government with which we can have similar direct discussions. The United Kingdom welcomes President Abbas' continued efforts to form a new Palestinian Government. We will look at the programme of any Government closely. We wish to see a Palestinian Government with which we can work in partnership, which means that it is based on the three Quartet principles, namely, the renunciation of violence, the recognition of Israel, and the acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Road Map.

When this Council last met in this sort of session on the Middle East, we had just witnessed the awful events at Beit Hanoun. What happened at Beit Hanoun is a tragedy that we cannot afford to see repeated. Equally, rocket attacks on Israel are unacceptable. More rockets were fired at the town of Sderot today, critically injuring one person, even while the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was visiting.

All sides need to realize that violence simply begets more violence and does not and can never offer the solution. The extremists are not dying for the people. It is the people who are dying for the extremists. It is also important that the abducted Israeli soldier, Corporal Shalit, be released. Equally, it is important that detained Palestinian ministers and legislators also be released.

The United Kingdom remains troubled by the humanitarian situation in the occupied territories. We have given $57 million this year and the European Union has given more to the Palestinians this year than in previous years, some $820 million. I would like to take this opportunity to say that we align ourselves with the statement that will shortly be made by the presidency of the European Union.

The current situation further underlines the necessity of finding a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We continue to believe that the Road Map offers the best chance for a lasting peace.

I would like to say a few words about Lebanon. Despite today's tragic event, there has been good progress on implementation of many aspects of United Nations Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), although it is clear that more needs to be done. The United Kingdom hopes that all Member States, and particularly those in the region, will meet the obligations under resolution 1701 (2006) and help the democratically elected Government of Lebanon to implement it. All parties in Lebanon need to work

together in a spirit of conciliation and cooperation to create the conditions in which peace, stability and democracy can flourish. We hope that countries in the region will encourage them to do so.

Mr. Manongi (United Republic of Tanzania): I thank the Under-Secretary-General for his introductory remarks.

Tanzania continues to be deeply concerned by the persisting cycle of violence in the Middle East, despite repeated calls for the cessation of hostilities and a return to dialogue. We are concerned that Israeli troops have continued to target Palestinian militants, resulting in a large number of civilian casualties, while militants have increased rocket attacks against Israel, injuring and killing civilians and damaging property.

We strongly believe that peace between Israel and the Palestinians would usher in peace to the whole of the Middle East region. We also believe that it is not proper for the international community to remain unconcerned in the face of the disastrous course of events and the horror that is ravaging the region. We are concerned that the recent cycle of violence has reached a level at which, unless it is arrested, the cycle may become irreversible.

It is encouraging, however, to note that there is serious awareness of the gravity of the conflict and that several moves are already being taken to initiate a change in the situation in the region. Recent efforts by Spain, Italy and France aimed at launching a new Middle East peace initiative are welcome and deserve solid support. Their plan to arrange a European Union summit in December and to act jointly to initiate political reforms in the Middle East should provide a useful approach to the conflict. We hope that preparations for that important meeting will proceed well and that the outcome of the deliberations will provide a new avenue for resolving the long-standing problems confronting the region.

Progress can be achieved first and foremost if the parties decide to cease hostilities immediately. In our view, a ceasefire, if possible monitored by an international observer force, should allow an atmosphere conducive to tackling other outstanding issues, such as the formation of a Palestinian Government of national unity, the exchange of prisoners and due recognition of the existence of Israel. In parallel, it should then be possible to initiate talks between Israel's Prime Minister and the President of the Palestinian Authority. Similarly, regular consultations between the two sides towards developing a comprehensive approach that addresses a wide range of issues beyond security, including economic issues, should be pursued.

The formation of a Palestinian unity government holds the key to ending the current stalemate and to building a climate of trust in which the political process can be rekindled. The Middle East has never enjoyed peace for long, but the situation has never been worse than it is, given the stepped-up attacks and counterattacks and the economic paralysis on the Palestinian side. We can only hope that deliberate efforts will be taken to ensure that there is no further destruction, deaths and injuries. The Israelis and the Palestinians alike should now realize that the endless violence is complicating the search for lasting peace in the area and that stability is in the interest of everybody.

Turning to Lebanon, we deeply regret and condemn the reported assassination of the Lebanese Minister of Industry this morning. That criminal act is yet another demonstration of the urgent to conclude investigations of previous assassinations and of bringing those responsible for those criminal acts to justice.

We have also received with dismay news of the abrupt resignation of six Hizbollah-associated cabinet ministers and threats of mass demonstration by Hizbollah, seeking more political power. In our view, Lebanon needs time to adjust and to adapt to a host of issues, especially after the summer's war. We therefore appeal for calm so as to facilitate that readjustment and the reconstruction of its infrastructure, which suffered so heavily during the recent hostilities.

Mr. Ikouebe (Congo) (*spoke in French*): I wish at the outset to thank Mr. Gambari for his briefing on a situation that continues to deteriorate.

The news concerning Lebanon that he announced earlier was not at all reassuring. I, too, condemn the assassination of Minister Gemayal and offer his family and the Government of Lebanon my sincere condolences. I believe that this tragic event should not prevent us from encouraging the inter-Lebanese dialogue and, in particular, from combating impunity.

We are holding yet another meeting today, and some would say that we shall merely be making more

statements, but that is simply because there seems to be no definitive solution on the horizon. Instead, the opposite would seem to be true, and yet that is not because the international community has not sought to advance the concrete modalities of a settlement to the crisis that would rule out any use of violence. I would refer to certain approaches that have been repeatedly taken in the past, such as recourse to international law, including international humanitarian law; resolutions of the United Nations; the principles of the Madrid conference; and the Road Map drawn up by the Quartet, with its generous vision of two States. Unfortunately, the second of those two States, Palestine, has yet to see the light of day, which only exacerbates frustrations and tension. I would also refer to the Arab peace initiative announced in Beirut in 2002. In particular, I restate its generous offer of an exchange of land for peace. Other initiatives have also been tried.

Given the impasse, what should be done? The first thing that needs to be done is to implement decisions already taken. The crux of the whole tragedy is that we fail to implement our own decisions. Today, however, I want to be somewhat naïve and cling to an approach that stresses certain positive signals that should be encouraged.

The first of those signals are the attempts, sometimes desperate, of the Palestinian leaders to establish a government of national unity that would allow the situation to be resolved. In our view, the current deadlock punishes the people. We should not give the impression that the international community is trying to punish the Palestinian people for freely exercising its right to democracy by electing its own leaders. Furthermore, we call on those democratically elected Palestinian leaders to abide by the rules of the game by accepting all previously concluded agreements.

We also thank the Arab leaders for sending another positive signal when they committed themselves recently to assisting the Palestinian people, which has been hard hit by sanctions and other restrictions.

We would also like to welcome the announcement made a few weeks ago by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert that he is prepared to hold discussions with President Abbas.

Moreover, we must explore and encourage every possibility to involve all the main regional stakeholders in the various peace processes under way. Here in the Chamber a few days ago, one of those stakeholders — Syria, if I may refer to it by name — clearly indicated to us its willingness to contribute to the search for peace. The representative of that country also told us that Syria was not part of the problem, but rather a part of the solution. We should encourage Syria.

I also wish to note that there have been some stirrings in the Middle East region with regard to another crisis, namely, the situation in Iraq. Meetings between leaders of the region have been announced in an effort to consider how to stabilize the situation.

I believe that those are all developments that we should encourage. Other stakeholders who are not necessarily part of the region could also join in those efforts. We believe that those are signs that must be resolutely encouraged and followed up.

I have told the Council that my delegation's view is somewhat naive, because realism in the course of the last 60 years has brought the situation to a deadlock. My delegation very much believes in the virtues of negotiation. I would like to conclude with an anecdote.

Several months ago, a delegation that we believe to be friendly warned us that the Council had before it an unacceptable draft resolution. We responded that it was possible to improve the text. The reply to us was that that was impossible and that it should not be improved. I said, in turn, that they were talking to the wrong person, because my Government pays me to negotiate. I mention that just to illustrate that we truly believe in the virtues of dialogue without preconditions. For if all draft resolutions submitted to the Council were perfect from the very outset, we would have nothing more to do in either the Chamber or anywhere else. I therefore call upon all actors to give up all of their prejudices and truly begin dialogue.

Mr. Yankey (Ghana): We very much appreciate the briefing we have just received from Under-Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari on the situation in the Middle East. We share the common concern expressed about the escalating violence and the high number of civilian casualties, especially on the Palestinian side. But we are no less saddened by the assassination of the Lebanese Minister.

In the absence of an active peace process to address the grievances and interests of all the parties involved in the Middle East conflict, we are likely to witness more ugly incidents — such as the brutal assassination of the Lebanese minister and, before that, the tragic incidents in Beit Hanoun and those that took place during the war in Lebanon — as well as the intolerable deprivation and poor humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. We agree with the Under-Secretary-General that the status quo is futile and unacceptable. We therefore welcome the proposed initiative by France, Italy and Spain which we have just heard. We hope it will yield some positive results.

We have also heard the repeated denunciation of both the incessant indiscriminate firing of numerous Qassam rockets into Israel by Palestinian militants and the devastating consequences of Israeli reprisals. It is necessary to emphasize that those actions stem from decades of power struggle involving the right to self-determination and independence of both the peoples of Israel and Palestine. Ghana is disappointed that the various peace initiatives have brought the parties no closer to a settlement. Although the Israelis have realized their own State, they must confront various security threats. For the Palestinians, the dream of an independent State remains a distant one that, in fact, risks being compromised permanently, given the evolving situation on the ground. Ghana believes that the way to lasting peace is a just and negotiated settlement that gives the two parties meaningful space to realize their national aspirations.

We also recognize that Lebanon, Syria, Iran and Iraq are essential factors in the equation for peace in the Middle East. But a genuine commitment to peace requires sustained dialogue among all the parties, based on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all the States in the region.

Today, it is not only the integrity of the Security Council that has been called into question for failing to implement its own resolutions. We also expect the Quartet to deliver on its promise to implement the road map for peace in the Middle East. That is the only way to assure the Palestinians that the international community is committed to helping them realize their aspirations for national independence. At the same time, the security of Israel must be recognized as a constant in the equation for peace, and the necessary guarantees given so that the Israelis no longer feel singled out for condemnation by the international community whenever they take steps to defend their national security.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I wish to refer to the situation in Lebanon to express the deep shock and concern of French authorities at the cowardly assassination this morning in Beirut of Pierre Gemayel, the Minister for Industry. France would like to extend its condolences to the family of Mr. Gemayel. We condemn in the strongest terms this new attempt to destabilize Lebanon through violence, intimidation and assassination. France also reaffirms its commitment to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, as well as our support for the legitimate and democratically elected Government of Mr. Fouad Siniora. At a time when the Security Council is considering the establishment of an international criminal tribunal, the international community must send those who employ assassination and violence a message that their crimes will not go unpunished. As the Secretary-General has said, there will be no peace without justice in Lebanon.

I would like to thank Mr. Gambari for his briefing. France is also very concerned about the ongoing violence in Israel and the Palestinian territories. In this Chamber on 9 November 2006 (see S/PV.5564), I expressed my country's great shock at the tragic events that cost the lives of many Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip, in particular in the area of Beit Hanoun. At the request of the General Assembly, a fact-finding mission is promptly to be sent to the area by the Secretary-General. We hope that this mission will fully elucidate the Beit Hanoun tragedy. We call on all parties to cooperate with the Secretary-General to that end.

Unfortunately, since those tragic events, the situation has continued to deteriorate. Rockets fired by Palestinian armed groups have caused more Israeli casualties, in Sderot. Other Israeli military operations have also taken the lives of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank. An end must be put to all violence.

The Palestinian Authority must combat terrorism and in particular put an end to the firing of rockets into Israeli territory. The Palestinian Government's failure to take decisive action in that respect is of concern. Israel, for its part, must halt any operations that put civilian populations at risk, in particular the bombing

of residential areas. Israel's legitimate right to defend its citizens must be exercised with full respect for international humanitarian law.

France believes that, given the distressing increase in the number of civilian casualties, there should be an immediate discussion on ways of strengthening the protection of civilian populations. The upcoming meeting of the Quartet could provide the proper framework to begin such a discussion on the basis of the proposals that the Secretary-General, in cooperation with his partners, primarily the European Union, might deem useful to formulate.

The cessation of violence, in order to be effective and durable, must be accompanied by the creation of credible political prospects. We call on both sides to adopt confidence-building measures and to lay the groundwork for the resumption of the peace process.

France calls on the Palestinians to work for national unity. We urge all factions, primarily Hamas, to respond favourably to President Abbas's appeal for the formation of a new government with a political platform reflecting the principles of the peace process endorsed by Mr. Abbas. Such a government, which would be a legitimate partner of the international community, should receive the necessary support for carrying out reforms expected of the Palestinian Authority, including in the area of security.

France calls on the Israelis to refrain from any unilateral action that might prejudge the results of final status negotiations or undermine prospects for the creation of a viable Palestinian State. In keeping with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, it must put an end to its settlement activities and to the building of the wall inside the West Bank. Finally, the conditions governing the movement of Palestinians within, between and to the Palestinian territories must improve pursuant to the Agreement on Movement and Access concluded in November 2005 and the Agreed Principles for the Rafah Crossing.

France, together with its European Union partners, will continue to act without letup and with resolve to find a just, lasting and comprehensive solution based on the resolutions of the Security Council, the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative. Given the current impasse, we reiterate our conviction that an international conference, carefully prepared with the participation of all stakeholders, should be convened very shortly in order to revive the hopes of the peoples of the region and help the parties to break the current stalemate. France, Italy and Spain, together with their European partners, are discussing this issue so as to contribute to overcoming the impasse in the peace process. That is the thrust of the initiative taken at Girona.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): Let me state at the outset that we are shocked and appalled by the fact that yet another high-ranking Lebanese official — Minister of Industry Pierre Gemayel — has been killed. Japan strongly condemns that brutal act of violence, which can only destabilize the already volatile situation in Lebanon. We express our deep condolences to the family of the deceased, and we expect that the perpetrators of this crime will be brought to justice, as should the perpetrators of other heinous acts of political violence in that tormented country. For the sake of the country's stability, in our view, the sooner that is done, the better.

I join other members in thanking Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his comprehensive briefing on recent developments in the Middle East. The picture that Mr. Gambari presented to us of the situation in the Middle East is indeed a grim one. It is a matter of deep concern that the cycle of violence between Palestinian military groups and the Israel Defense Forces and the political deadlock in Palestine continue to plague the region and drive it deeper into crisis. Of further concern is the resultant continuing deterioration of the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian population, in particular the heavy toll registered among innocent civilians, including women and children.

The vicious circle will have to be broken. That can be achieved only if political leadership and the will to settle differences are mobilized by the leaders of all the parties concerned.

Japan wishes to make clear that, under the new Government led by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, it remains deeply committed to encouraging and supporting all such peaceful and political endeavours in the region. To that end, Japan will continue to provide all of the support and assistance necessary to address the Middle East peace process in a constructive and proactive way.

On the political front, in recent weeks we have witnessed certain efforts being made by the parties

concerned, including in particular some Arab countries, to help establish a new government of the Palestinian Authority. It is our strong hope that those efforts will continue and that they will produce results acceptable to all.

To break the current stalemate, we urge Palestinians to find ways of overcoming their differences, achieve a breakthrough and support a new Palestinian Authority government that would resume the work previously begun to achieve coexistence and mutual prosperity with Israel. At the same time, we expect that Israel, on its part, will support the efforts of President Abbas, who is striving to achieve such a breakthrough in the deadlocked situation.

If a new Palestinian Authority government, once established, makes clear that it would pursue the realization of peace and peaceful coexistence through negotiation with Israel, then the international community should respond positively and support such a new direction as most welcome. In order to resolve the problems that exist, especially at this critical moment, nothing is more important than direct talks between the parties at the highest level. We therefore strongly hope for an early resumption of the long-delayed direct talks between the leaders of the two parties, Israel and Palestine.

There can be no military solution to the Middle East peace process. All parties concerned should exercise the maximum restraint, refraining from military action and violence on both sides.

Japan strongly deplores the incident that took place on 8 November in Beit Hanoun. We strongly urge the Government of Israel to refrain from taking any military action which may lead to civilian casualties. We also hope that the Government of Israel will make serious and expeditious efforts to determine the causes of the incident in Beit Hanoun and to prevent the recurrence of such tragic events by ensuring that the panel of investigation established within the Israel Defense Forces carries out its work promptly. Japan renews its call upon Israel to release the Palestinian ministers and others held in custody.

At the same time, we urge the Government of the Palestinian Authority to take credible, effective measures to rein in the violence of Palestinian extremist groups, including launching Qassam rocket attacks into Israeli territory. We also renew calls on the Palestinian Authority to bring about the safe return of the Israeli soldier abducted in June.

The deteriorating humanitarian situation afflicting the Palestinian people is a matter of deep concern to the entire international community. To resolve this crisis, the international community should continue to provide the humanitarian relief and assistance that is urgently needed. In this regard, we stress once again that an early Israeli resumption of the transfer of tax and customs revenues to the Palestinian Authority, as well as the full implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access concluded in November 2005, are matters of utmost priority. Japan, as a major donor of assistance to the Palestinians for many years, will make every effort to continue to provide such assistance.

On Lebanon, serious efforts by the parties concerned and the continued support of the international community are needed to address the issues referred to in Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), including a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution. On the other hand, Lebanon is going through major domestic political upheavals, which we strongly hope will be resolved by the parties concerned peacefully, through dialogue.

We wish to reaffirm the importance of Syria's role in achieving stability in Lebanon and peace throughout the region. Japan fervently hopes that Syria will positively and constructively engage in the political process and cooperate with the efforts being made by the international community to this end.

Japan will continue to be engaged in the process, working with all concerned countries in the region with a view to defusing tensions, restoring stability and nurturing a spirit of cooperation, which we believe will lead to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East region.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to thank Mr. Gambari, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his comprehensive briefing. We were shocked to learn this morning that Mr. Pierre Gemayel, Minister for Industry of Lebanon, was assassinated earlier today. We express deep regret in that connection. We would also like to extend our condolences to the family of Mr. Gemayel and hope that, at this difficult moment, the Lebanese people will stay calm and maintain domestic peace and stability.

Over the past month, the situation between Palestine and Israel has again intensified, causing heavy casualties among innocent civilians. China is deeply concerned about that. We have expressed our position on this issue on a number of occasions. China has consistently maintained that the conflict between Palestine and Israel should be resolved through peaceful negotiations. We are opposed to all military actions that cause civilian casualties. Israel must strictly abide by international humanitarian law and immediately put an end to military action against Palestine. Palestine should also stop firing rockets into Israel. We hope that both Israel and Palestine will act with maximum restraint and reason, and put an immediate end to the vicious circle of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth and meeting violence with violence, so as to avoid further turmoil in that region.

The key to a resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is for both Palestine and Israel to gradually restore mutual confidence and, through peaceful negotiations, find a solution that is truly in the fundamental interests of both peoples.

At the same time, the international community should also provide favourable conditions for the resumption of talks, as well as effective support. The United Nations — in particular, the Security Council — shoulders a heavy responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and ought to play its proper role in the context of the Middle East issue. This month, both the Security Council and the General Assembly successively convened emergency meetings to discuss the Palestine-Israel issue. We believe that those meetings were timely and necessary, and that they sent a clear message to both sides. Regrettably, the Security Council did not adopt the draft resolution submitted by Qatar. This brings us back to a question: In the face of never-ending conflict between Palestine and Israel, how can the Security Council better fulfil its responsibilities and help both sides to end the violence and achieve lasting peace? That is a question that we all need to reflect upon.

Consultations are currently taking place between the main Palestinian factions, Fatah and Hamas, on the formation of a unity government. We hope that they will continue their constructive consultations so as to reach agreement on the formation of a unity government at an early date. We also expect that such a unity government will be able to assume the important responsibility of leading the Palestinian people in participating in the Middle East peace process.

We hope that both Palestine and Israel will put aside their past grievances and start a dialogue so as to create favourable conditions and an environment conducive to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. We also hope that the Quartet mechanism can play a positive role for the resumption of the Middle East peace process and that the Security Council will continue to fulfil the responsibilities entrusted to it.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Arab Group, allow me, at the outset, to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this Security Council debate to discuss an issue of high priority for the Council: the situation in the Middle East. I should also like to thank Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for coming to brief the Council on behalf of the Secretary-General.

Sad news from the Middle East continues to make headlines. We have just learned the tragic news of the assassination of the Lebanese Minister of Industry, Mr. Pierre Amin Gemayel. We express our condolences to the family of Pierre Gemayel, who was the victim of a treacherous criminal act, and to the Government and the people of Lebanon. We firmly condemn that heinous crime, and call for the speedy arrest and trial of those who were responsible.

Everyone is fully aware of how grave the situation in the Middle East has become. The region has been troubled since the beginning of the year — a year marked by several serious incidents leading to the current escalation of the situation, especially in Gaza, since early this month.

The Council failed to adopt a draft resolution that would have responded to the recent escalation and called for the cessation of violence between the Palestinians and the Israelis. In spite of all of the efforts that we, as sponsors of the draft resolution, made, with a view to reaching a fair and balanced text, the draft resolution never saw the light of day. That is what prompted us to submit a similar draft resolution to the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, on illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory, having earlier requested the resumption of that emergency special session. The draft resolution (A/ES-10/L.19) garnered the support of the

overwhelming majority of Member States, which shows that it was fair and balanced and which confers international legitimacy on its contents.

We all recognize, however, that, under the Charter, primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security lies with the Security Council. Therefore, we do not believe that the adoption of a resolution by the General Assembly is sufficient to deal with this issue.

All acts of violence, provocation, incitement and destruction deserve condemnation, regardless of who commits them. While we believe that a lasting and comprehensive settlement is within reach, we also believe that it can come about only through dialogue. Violence has proved its futility, in resolving this crisis, as it has in other cases.

The establishment of peace in the Middle East is an issue that directly concerns the Arab States. Based on that understanding, we have continuously urged the parties concerned to pursue an approach that promotes the chances of peace. In this regard, we urge all parties to provide full support for Palestinian national efforts aimed at achieving national reconciliation and at forming a government of national unity.

Based on our belief that dialogue is the solution, we were at the forefront of those who called for an open ministerial-level meeting of the Council last September in order to revive the peace process. It is incumbent upon the Council to continue to provide the impetus necessary to move the peace process ahead, including by continuing to hold high-level discussions to highlight the attention that the Council is devoting to this issue.

While the Council should play its role, the international community, and in particular the Quartet, is called upon to take specific and concrete steps to revive the stagnant Middle East peace process on all tracks, within the framework of previously reached agreements and on the basis of relevant Security Council resolutions, the terms of reference of the peace process and the Road Map.

The devastating war launched by Israel against Lebanon last summer left a very bad impact on stability in the region. In addition to the human and material losses it inflicted on Lebanon, it has affected to a large extent the lives of the citizens of a country that has just emerged from decades of internal conflict. That is why the issue of maintaining the stability, security and sovereignty of Lebanon is of critical importance in the quest for peace and stability in the Middle East.

We must also support genuine rapprochement between Lebanon and its neighbour Syria, because close relations between the two sister countries is their only normal and natural condition. Any different situation will not have a beneficial effect on stability in the region as a whole. We are confident that the historical, demographic and geographical ties that exist between the two countries would eventually be the strongest factor in determining the relationship between them.

We look forward to addressing the situation of the Syrian Golan Heights, occupied by Israel since 1967, because that issue is an important part of the crisis in the Middle East. Therefore, its resolution will ease general tensions in the region. There is no doubt that direct negotiations between the two sides is the ideal way to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions and to achieve a settlement of the issue.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): The establishment of peace in the Middle East is one of the issues that directly concerns us in the State of Qatar. From this standpoint, we have continued to urge the parties to adopt an approach that encourages the chances of peace.

The State of Qatar had lately undertaken diplomatic mediation efforts to reconcile divisions within the Palestinian leadership, because we believe that Palestinian internal stability is a necessary condition for an effective peace process. In this respect, we urge all the parties to provide full support to Palestinian national efforts that seek national reconciliation and the establishment of a government of national unity. Based on our firm conviction in the State of Qatar of the Security Council's primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, we will extend, during our presidency of the Council next month, an invitation to convene a ministerial meeting of the Council to consider all possible ways to help achieve sustainable peace in the Middle East, as discussed at the September ministerial meeting, and to put an end to the violence and counter-violence that have been claiming the lives of innocent people in a region where the conflict is as old as Organization itself. We also look

forward to the active participation of Council members in providing the momentum that will realize that ambition.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): At the outset, I would like to join previous speakers in thanking Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his monthly briefing and for his update on the current situation in the Middle East.

Slovakia aligns itself with the statement that will be delivered shortly by the Permanent Representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

Less than two weeks ago we had a useful and constructive debate on the current developments in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute (see S/PV.5564). The ongoing developments on the ground, unfortunately, only lead us again to reiterate our deep concern about the escalating tensions and increased violence in Gaza and the West Bank. We strongly deplore any action that causes civilian casualties. We therefore call on both parties to exercise the utmost restraint and do everything possible to calm the situation and prevent further dangerous escalation that will only lead to suffering and loss of life. Mutual violence must stop, for there is no military solution to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute.

In this regard, we call on Israel to end its military operations that endanger Palestinian civilians and to take every possible measure to protect their lives. Although we believe Israel has the right to self-defence against terrorism and its perpetrators, its response must always be proportionate and in accordance with international humanitarian law. We also repeat our call for the immediate release of Palestinian ministers and legislators detained in Israel. At the same time, we expect the Israeli Government to continue its commitment to peace in the Middle East, based on principles laid out in the Road Map, and to refrain from such steps and activities that threaten the viability of an agreed two-State solution.

On the other hand, we urge the Palestinian Authority to undertake all necessary measures and make all efforts to find and release the kidnapped Israeli soldier and to prevent further military and terrorist attacks on Israel, notably the launching of rockets against Israeli population centres. We support the efforts and leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas to achieve that goal and to foster national unity among Palestinians.

In this respect, we support the efforts of President Abbas to form a government of national unity that will be committed to the Quartet principles, have a political platform that will enable early engagement to achieve peace and to continue the dialogue on a solution to the Middle East conflict.

We also remain deeply concerned at the economic and humanitarian situation in Gaza and the West Bank. In this regard, we highlight the importance of the temporary international mechanism, which enables the channelling of resources and deliverance of assistance directly to the Palestinian people and thereby address their urgent humanitarian and financial needs. To this end, we urge Israel to resume transfers of withheld Palestinian tax and customs revenues and encourage it to carry out those transfers by way of the temporary international mechanism. We also call for full implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access and ask that the Rafah, Karni and other border crossings remain permanently open.

We take this opportunity to reaffirm our support for a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict, based on all relevant Security Council resolutions and negotiations between the two sides.

Turning to the latest development in Lebanon, we were deeply shocked this morning to learn of the assassination of the Minister of Industry of Lebanon, Mr. Pierre Gemayel. We condemn that horrible crime as an attempt to destabilize the situation in Lebanon and to disrupt the process of reconciliation in that country. We urge the Lebanese authorities to undertake all necessary measures to investigate this crime and to bring the perpetrators to justice. This pattern of politically motivated killings and violence in Lebanon must be stopped. We express our deepest condolences to the Government of Lebanon and to the Lebanese people on their tragic loss.

We fully support the Lebanese Government, which was legitimately elected last year through free and democratic parliamentary elections, in its efforts and in the steps it has taken to regain control and authority over its whole territory and to re-establish stability and security within the country. Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence have to be respected by everybody. Lebanon and its people have already suffered enough, and further destabilization should not be allowed. The

national dialogue has to continue, with the aim of reaching consensus on several important issues, including the disarmament of all militias in the country, which, through their offensive acts, represent a constant threat to the stability and security of Lebanon and its neighbours. The Lebanese Government has to be the sole authority, with a monopoly on the use of force within its territory.

In this respect, we would also like to emphasize the importance of ensuring full compliance with the arms embargo imposed through resolution 1701 (2006) and of progress towards the normalization of relations between Lebanon and Syria, as well as the delineation of their common borders, including in the area of the Sheba'a farms. We are convinced that the resolution of these issues would significantly contribute to the stabilization of the situation in the region.

Last but not least, we should also not forget about the need to release the two abducted Israeli soldiers kidnapped by Hizbollah on 12 July 2006. We also understand the need to resolve the issue of the Lebanese prisoners, and we encourage the respective authorities to make progress on that issue.

We fully understand that the situation in Lebanon, and in the whole region, is complicated; it will take time to make progress on certain issues. However, we wish to underline that all of this can be achieved only through peaceful means and negotiations. As has already been proven on several occasions, there is no military solution to any conflict or dispute. Reconstruction of the country and further development can proceed only in a peaceful environment. A stable and prosperous Lebanon would significantly contribute to the stabilization of the situation in the entire Middle East region. That is why we call on all countries in the region to contribute positively to the peacebuilding process in Lebanon.

Mr. Mayoral (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, on behalf of my delegation, I would like to join all those who have expressed their condolences on the tragic death of Pierre Gemayel, Minister of Industry of Lebanon. Through you, Mr. President, we would like to extend our condolences to the Gemayel family, a family which, unfortunately, has shed its blood for Lebanon. This is another reason for my country to be concerned over the future fate and territorial integrity of Lebanon. As we express our condolences, we would like to condemn vigorously this assassination. We hope that the perpetrators will be brought to justice as quickly as possible.

Secondly, we would like to thank Mr. Gambari for his briefing on the situation in the Middle East, on a long-standing conflict. We know that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is the key to beginning to resolve the overall conflict in the Middle East — and, indeed, not just in the Middle East. Other conflicts, in other countries in Asia and Africa, have invisible links to the matrix of the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

At this new stage in the process of destruction, death and hatred which, as we have said, goes back a long time, we believe that we have to begin at the beginning: by taking the initial measures to prevent the conflict from continuing. Within this framework, we renew our call to the parties and to the international community to break the vicious circle of death and destruction.

First, we believe that Israeli military operations that endanger the civilian population in the Gaza Strip should be stopped immediately. Similarly, attacks carried out by Palestinian groups with Qassam rockets into Israeli territory must also cease immediately.

Secondly, we believe that we should continue supporting the efforts of President Abbas to form a government of national unity, without such support constituting interference in internal Palestinian affairs. The international community must contribute and must fully support the process. In this regard, we hope that the talks under way, which have still not reached a successful conclusion, can continue between Fatah and Hamas leaders and that a government of national unity can be formed as soon as possible.

Thirdly, we believe that the immediate and unconditional release of the Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, should take place. Similarly, Palestinian legislators and ministers taken prisoner by Israel should be released.

Fourthly, we believe that urgent measures must be taken to ease the suffering of the Palestinian people. Palestinian tax and customs revenues withheld by Israel must be transferred through the appropriate international mechanisms. Likewise, we believe that the Agreement on Movement and Access should be fully implemented, and that the crossings in and out of Gaza should be kept permanently opened.

Here, we must point out that all of those measures would be in vain unless a genuine process of negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians were resumed. The first step should be for Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas to meet and start to negotiate. But this dialogue will not be viable if Israel continues with its policy of faits accomplis on the ground, such as the construction of the separation barrier and the settlement activity in the West Bank. Clearly, such policies should stop in order to begin the dialogue.

Unfortunately, the parties have demonstrated that, on their own, they are unable to take the necessary measures. That is why the active assistance of the international community is required. The Security Council and the Quartet have an important role to play and in future must be as proactive and effective as possible. We also wish to express our satisfaction with and support for the initiative of an international conference, as proposed by the head of State of Spain, with the support of France and Italy. We believe that we must return to the path embarked upon at the Madrid Conference 15 years ago.

Regarding the situation in Lebanon, in addition to expressing our concern about today's tragic assassination — which will obviously increase the tension and deepen the political crisis — we affirm our belief that all the parties in Lebanon must resolve their differences, while respecting the democratic rules of the process, and that they must not under any circumstances resort to the threat of force. All Lebanese actors must act with the utmost caution, taking into account their past and the terrible civil war that they have experienced.

With respect to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), we welcome the fact that the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the Lebanese armed forces have continued to maintain peace and order south of the Litani River. We consider as positive the measures undertaken in recent weeks to find weapons caches in that area. Nevertheless, we cannot fail to indicate our grave concern at the continued Israeli incursions into Lebanese airspace, which are violations of the cessation of hostilities. We also express our concern that no solution has been found to the issue of the two Israeli soldiers captured more than four months ago.

Concerning other outstanding aspects of resolution 1701 (2006), we hope that the Secretary-General makes some specific recommendations in his next report.

The difficult juncture being experienced in the Middle East demonstrates once again that the path of violence only helps to increase the suffering of the peoples of the region. Therefore, the only viable alternative is that of a just and lasting peace that encompasses all tracks: Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian. The foundations for such a peace are the relevant resolutions adopted by the Security Council; the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace; and the Beirut Arab Peace Initiative.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): We did not intend to touch upon the situation in Lebanon in our statement today, since the Council will soon revert to the matter when we take stock of the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). However, today's assassination of the Lebanese Minister for Industry requires that we react.

First of all, we reconfirm our condemnation of terrorism and encourage all parties to refrain from using violence as a tool to achieve political goals. The situation in Lebanon is already very fragile. Whoever is responsible for today's assassination is adding to an already tense situation. Such an act is not just a crime that must be condemned; it is also very irresponsible, since it adds to the instability. It confirms that it is important that the International Independent Investigation Commission also assist the Lebanese Government in identifying those responsible for attacks other than that which led to the tragic death of former Prime Minister Hariri.

Denmark continues to be committed to supporting the legitimate and democratically elected Government under Prime Minister Siniora and his efforts to stabilize the situation in the country. We encourage all Lebanese parties to reach consensus and to resume the process of national dialogue.

Denmark aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

When we discussed the latest developments in the Middle East in this Chamber on 9 November 2006 and again on 11 November, I expressed our deep concern about the continuing violence that has led to the increasing and tragic loss of civilian life. The

importance of bringing and end to violence cannot be overemphasized. All sides must cease the use of force for political purposes. That requires an immediate halt to the attacks on Israel. The continuing rocket attacks from the Palestinian territory into Israel are unacceptable. They must be condemned, and the Palestinian Government must take action to ensure that such attacks are stopped. At the same time, Israel must halt its military operations that endanger the Palestinian civilian population. Denmark encourages Israel to ensure that short-term measures aimed at improving the security of Israeli civilians are implemented in accordance with international law and that they do not undermine a lasting solution to the conflict.

In that regard, it is of great concern that the number of Palestinian civilian deaths is increasing. Denmark condemns the loss of civilian lives resulting from the Israeli military operation in Beit Hanoun. We have noted that Israel has admitted that it was a tragic mistake, and we look forward to the publication of the results of the thorough investigation into that horrific incident.

The right of a State to defend itself against terrorist threats does not justify the disproportionate or indiscriminate use of force or action. The disproportionate use of force is contrary to international humanitarian law and tends to defy the very political purpose it is supposed to serve, by fuelling further hatred and conflict.

The challenge is to support and strengthen those forces that are committed to a political solution. That is the only way out of the current stalemate of violence. As a first step, the kidnapped Israeli soldier must be released immediately. Likewise, the Palestinian ministers and legislators in Israeli custody must be freed promptly.

However, in order to pave the way for lasting progress, we must revive the vision of two independent States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace within recognized borders. That vision is a core principle of the Road Map. Certainly, the continued violence is leading us in a wrong and worrisome direction.

Increasingly, collapse of the Palestinian Authority and chaos in the territory seem imminent. It is a social, economic and political collapse that is about to become a grim reality. Clashes among Palestinian factions only aggravate the human suffering and desperation. They run counter to the interests of the Palestinian people. Thus, we support President Abbas's attempt to build national unity and to establish a credible Palestinian government with a platform that reflects the principles laid down by the Quartet.

A functioning Palestinian government is essential for the governing of the Palestinian territories. It is equally critical as a viable partner for the international community in the efforts to alleviate the dire humanitarian situation, to breathe life into the Palestinian economy and to relaunch the peace process. The international community stands ready to support such a government.

Israel has a crucial role to play in improving Palestinian economic prospects. The tax and customs revenues now being withheld should be released immediately. Those revenues can be channelled through the temporary international mechanism, which has proved itself valuable in targeting aid directly to the Palestinian people. Moreover, the Agreement on Movement and Access must be implemented fully and immediately.

In conclusion, I would re-emphasize that all parties must participate if the peace process is to succeed. Regional players should do everything they can to support efforts that could lead to a resumption of the peace process. Neighbours, including Syria, must play constructive roles. And the international community, led by the Quartet, must be willing and able to provide whatever incentives are needed to set the healing process in motion. It is my hope that the Quartet can soon announce when a meeting will take place.

Ms. Wolcott Sanders (United States of America): The United States condemns the assassination this morning of Lebanese Minister of Industry Pierre Gemayel. This assassination is a clear act of terrorism that shows why it is critical that the Security Council support democracy and accountability in Lebanon and, in that vein, support as quickly as possible the establishment of a tribunal as requested by the Lebanese Government in the wake of the assassination of Rafik Hariri. All Member countries, especially Lebanon's neighbours, must stand against such acts of intimidation and against those groups that seek to destabilize and divide Lebanon, and must support Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We will

be working with colleagues to develop a text to address this situation and to strongly support the Government of Lebanon.

Nearly two weeks ago, the Security Council met (see S/PV.5565) and considered an unbalanced and one-sided draft resolution. Four members abstained and the United States voted no on that draft resolution.

On 17 November, the General Assembly met in a politically-motivated emergency special session, adopting yet another one-sided and biased resolution (General Assembly resolution ES-10/16) that ignores the reality of the situation on the ground and does nothing to make progress toward greater peace and stability in the region.

The Human Rights Council met 15 November in Geneva, continuing its fixation on Israel to the exclusion of addressing pressing human rights issues elsewhere, including in Belarus, Burma, Cuba, North Korea, the Sudan, Uzbekistan and Zimbabwe.

Regrettably, none of this frenetic activity has made a constructive contribution to the reinvigoration of the Road Map or progress towards the two-State solution. Hastily-called meetings and polemical resolutions are no substitute for determination by the parties to undertake the hard work needed to take steps toward peace. We urge Member States to reject diplomatic theatrics that fail to serve the interests of peace or advance the aspirations of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples for a more secure, stable and prosperous future.

Since taking the reins of power in January, the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority Government has failed in its duty to the Palestinian people to lead responsibly and take the steps necessary to create a better future for its constituents. It is the responsibility of the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority Government to prevent terror, stop attacks from within Gaza and dismantle the terrorist infrastructure. Progress towards peace requires a Palestinian Government that disavows terror and violence and accepts the Quartet principles: renunciation of terror, recognition of Israel and acceptance of previous agreements.

More terror, whether directed at Israel or at the United States, is not the solution. Nor will it enable the Palestinian people to achieve their aspirations. In fact, the opposite is the case. We again call for the immediate and unconditional release of Corporal Gilad Shalit.

The Road Map and the principles contained therein remain the only agreed international basis upon which to move forward towards the two-State goal. The United States remains committed to diplomatic efforts to engage moderate leaders, help the Palestinians strengthen and reform their security sector and support Israeli and Palestinian leaders in their efforts to come together to resolve their differences.

Last week, Assistant Secretary of State David Welch met with his Quartet counterparts — European Union, the Russian Federation and the United Nations — to support implementation of the Road Map. We will continue to work closely with our Quartet partners and our friends in the region to create an environment that will facilitate progress toward the realization of President Bush's two-State vision.

The Quartet has welcomed efforts by Palestinian Authority President Abbas to form a government committed to Quartet principles, and the United States stands ready to renew engagement and assistance to a Palestinian Authority committed to peace.

In Lebanon, on 12 July, Hizbollah launched a conflict that caused enormous suffering and destruction in both Lebanon and Israel. This highlighted the risks of acquiescing in a status quo in Lebanon that permits militias to remain armed and unchecked. We call once again for the immediate and unconditional release of Israel Defense Forces soldiers Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser, kidnapped on 12 July.

The United States supports the efforts of the democratically elected Government of Lebanon as it expands its sovereignty over all its territory. The United States continues to call for the full implementation of Security Council resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006), particularly the provisions regarding the disbanding and disarming of the militias.

We are alarmed at indications that Syria is working with Hizbollah and other Lebanese allies to destabilize the democratically elected Government of Lebanon.

We are pleased with the Government of Lebanon's significant progress in deploying the Lebanese Armed Forces to the south of the country for the first time in almost 40 years, as well as the historic deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces along the

eastern part of the Blue Line and along Lebanon's border with Syria.

A rearmed Hizbollah could nullify efforts to restore and maintain peace, so it is vital to implement all the provisions of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), especially the creation of a zone between the Litani River and the Blue Line free of all armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), as well as the embargo on the sale or shipment of weapons except as authorized by the Lebanese Government or UNIFIL.

Syria's political and material support for Hizbollah's continued existence as a militia was made clear during last summer's hostilities in Lebanon, despite the call for the disarmament of all militias in Lebanon in Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). We are concerned that Syria is not abiding by the embargo on unauthorized weapons shipments into Lebanon imposed by resolution 1701 (2006).

The challenges before the United Nations, the international community and the countries in the Middle East demand a serious, realistic approach, and not political posturing. The people in the region deserve no less. The United States remains committed to working with those who can rise to these challenges and who have the courage to reject stalemate and polemics.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): We are very disturbed by and strongly condemn today's assassination of Pierre Gemayel. We call on all parties to show self-restraint and to refrain from actions which could cause a deterioration in the already volatile situation in Lebanon and further destabilize the country.

I wish to express our thanks to Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his informative and comprehensive briefing today.

Greece fully aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

During the past weeks, we have seen an alarming deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, and especially in Gaza. Both the Security Council and the General Assembly have examined the tragic events in Beit Hanoun, and I shall not repeat here all that has been said on this issue. However, what is obvious from the events of the past few weeks is that there is no military solution to the problem.

While Greece unreservedly condemns all acts of violence and terror, it recognizes, in this regard, Israel's legitimate right to self-defence and its duty and obligation to protect and safeguard its citizens, in accordance with international law and international humanitarian law. Nevertheless, it becomes apparent that violence only begets violence.

We share the view expressed by many that the existence of a credible political process must underpin all efforts aimed at stabilizing the situation. The framework of this process is outlined in the Road Map. Although there have lately been a lot of questions raised on whether or not the Road Map needs to be re-examined and updated, it seems to us that what is needed is not to reinvent the wheel, but rather to examine ways of making this wheel roll better. In this regard, we welcome the active role and contribution of the Quartet, which would be greatly enhanced by input from the parties themselves and from the countries of the region.

We welcome the recent meeting of the Quartet at the envoy level in Cairo on 15 November, and look forward to an early meeting of Quartet principals, which should, in our view, include a meeting with regional partners as well.

On Lebanon, we are encouraged by progress made in the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). We note with satisfaction that the overall troop strength of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), when combined with its naval component, has exceeded 9,500 troops. We welcome in particular the fact that Indonesian troops have now joined the other 20 countries contributing troops to UNIFIL.

We are following closely events as they unfold in the political sphere and around the national Lebanese dialogue. We note with concern that the consensual atmosphere prevalent before the eruption of hostilities of this summer is being challenged.

We urge all concerned to put the interests of the Lebanese people above all else and to avoid antagonistic rhetoric. The international community, for its part, should continue supporting the efforts of the Government of Lebanon both for the economic recovery of the worn-torn country and for the

consolidation of its territorial integrity, unity and political independence.

We look forward to receiving the Secretary-General's next report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), and reaffirm our support for his ongoing efforts.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Mr. Gambari for his comprehensive briefing on the situation regarding the settlement in the Middle East. We agree on the whole with his assessment of developments in Palestinian-Israeli relations and in the situation between Syria and Lebanon.

Much has been said at the United Nations in recent weeks about the situation in the Middle East. The situation in the region is constantly evolving, but unfortunately not yet in the optimal direction. Today more than ever before, we need collective steps to redress the situation.

Russia is firmly committed to the principle of two States, Israel and Palestine, existing side by side, as outlined in the Road Map. In our view, that implies the existence of a viable, sovereign and territorially unified Palestine living in peace and security with its neighbour Israel. Progress towards that goal is possible only through a cessation of violence and the parties' compliance with all relevant international obligations.

It remains critical that urgent action be taken to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, based on the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, the road map and the proposals of the Quartet of principal international mediators. The latter recently held a meeting in Cairo, at which various options were discussed for reviving the Quartet's collective efforts to overcome the deadlock on the Israeli-Palestinian track.

Russia has consistently promoted the revival of the Middle East peace process on all of its tracks. That core task was at the heart of the recent visit to the region by Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Soltanov. It is important that the Palestinian, Israeli, Egyptian and Jordanian leadership reaffirm the abiding importance of the road map as one of the bases of a Middle East settlement. We also deem it necessary to convene as soon as possible a meeting of the Quartet at the ministerial level, with the participation of the heads of the foreign ministries of Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. It would also be highly desirable for representatives of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to participate in that meeting.

Given the ongoing Israeli military activity in the Gaza sector, we wish to reaffirm once again our profound concern at such actions. We recognize Israel's right to self-defence, but it should be exercised with maximum restraint and proportionately to the existing threats. We call on the Israeli authorities to refrain from extrajudicial executions and so-called targeted assassinations. At the same time, we urgently appeal once again to the Palestinian Authority to take critical steps to halt the violence and terrorist attacks, including the firing of rockets from Gaza into Israeli territory.

We look forward to the speedy and unconditional release of Israeli soldier Gilat Shalit. We support the mediation efforts in that respect, including those to secure the release of Palestinian ministers and legislators and a number of other Palestinian detainees.

Russia supports the conclusions and recommendations of the Secretary-General, contained in his report (A/ES-10/361) on the register of damage to Palestinian property caused by Israel's construction of the separation wall. We believe that United Nations Members should consider that issue in a pragmatic, non-politicized manner and endorse the Secretary-General's recommendations.

One urgent task is to ensure the strict and full compliance of the parties with the Agreement on Movement and Access. It is essential to resolve questions related to the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Gaza and the resumed functioning of the Rafa and Karni crossing points.

We unconditionally support Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas and call on all inhabitants of the Palestinian territories to show solidarity with his efforts to achieve national reconciliation and to create, in Gaza and the West Bank, a Government of national unity, functioning in accordance with the well-known requirements formulated by the Quartet.

It is impossible to ensure the comprehensive nature of the peace process in the Middle East without progress on the Israeli-Syrian track. We believe that support from Damascus and Beirut for the idea of the temporary transfer of the Shaba'a farms to United Nations control could open the way to a resumption of

diplomatic contacts between Israel, Syria and Lebanon in order to reach mutually acceptable agreements. Of course, a positive attitude on the part of the Israeli side will be necessary if that is to occur.

We are closely following progress in the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). We consistently advocate strict and scrupulous respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Lebanon by all parties. In that connection, we stress the inadmissibility of the ongoing violations of its airspace by the Israeli air force. Such actions only raise additional tensions and threaten the security of United Nations peacekeepers.

We were shocked by the news of the murder of Lebanese Minister of Industry and member of Parliament Pierre Gemayel. We decisively condemn the crime and express our sincere condolences to Mr. Gemayel's family. We call for the organizers and perpetrators of that crime and other terrorist acts in Lebanon to be identified and duly punished. It is clear that the ongoing actions of forces seeking to undermine the already tense political situation in Lebanon are unacceptable and should not be allowed to continue. We hope that, at this difficult time, the Lebanese will demonstrate resolve and not give way to provocation or be tempted into confrontation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Peru.

I thank Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his valuable briefing to the Council today.

First, we wish to express our vigorous condemnation of the assassination of Lebanese Minister Pierre Gemayel and to reiterate our support for the process of sovereign and democratic affirmation in Lebanon. As I said at our meeting of 9 November on this item, this month's serious developments underscore the need to return to the peaceful solution offered by the Quartet's Road Map, which was endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 1515 (2003). That is the required path if we are to meet the goal of two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

To that end, we must encourage the internal cohesion of the Palestinian political regime. The problems of governance in Palestine make it difficult to undertake measures to prevent attacks from Gaza against Israeli objectives. Such attacks are unacceptable. Unfortunately, this situation has not been conducive either to the success of efforts to free the Israeli soldier who was kidnapped on 25 June 2006 or to putting an end to the smuggling of weapons into Gaza.

Moreover, the disproportionate response, which results in civilian Palestinian victims and which Peru has condemned, is a violation of international humanitarian law and creates hurdles to the search for ways to promote dialogue. In that connection, Peru once again urges all the parties involved to break the cycle of violence, destruction and death that has brought so much suffering to both peoples. We also urge the parties to respect the norms of international humanitarian law and to return to the path of dialogue in order to renew the peace process in accordance with the criteria established by the Quartet.

The international community should support the peace process in a constructive way, with a view to easing tension, restoring stability and facilitating the implementation of the Road Map in order to reach a final, just and sustainable solution in the region.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Finland.

Ms. Lintonen (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The countries of Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

At the outset, let me express my deepest condolences to the family of Mr. Pierre Gemayel, Lebanon's Minister for Industry, who was assassinated today. The presidency of the European Union condemns in the strongest terms this brutal assassination. The attack comes at a time when the political situation in Lebanon is already critically tense. The European Union urges all parties to refrain from activities that would further endanger the political stability of Lebanon. The European Union reiterates its full support for the legitimate and democratically elected Lebanese Government.

The continuing violence in the Middle East is a cause of deep concern. We have strongly deplored the Israeli military action in Gaza, which is resulting in a growing number of civilian casualties. We have also strongly deplored the firing of rockets into Israeli territory. The deterioration of the situation will only aggravate the already grave circumstances in the region, where a return to a comprehensive peace process with a clear political perspective is urgently needed.

The European Union reaffirms its intention to support Israeli and Palestinian efforts to advance the peace process. We underline our intention to actively contribute to the work within the Quartet to get the Middle East peace process urgently back on track in order to make progress towards a comprehensive settlement on the basis of the Road Map, relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the commitments made at Sharm el-Sheikh in 2005.

The European Union reiterates its call for the immediate release of the abducted Israeli soldier and commends the efforts in the region to that end, including by partners. We also repeat our call for the immediate release of Palestinian ministers and legislators detained in Israel.

The European Union urges the Palestinians to work for national unity and to form a government with a platform that reflects Quartet principles and allows for early engagement. Such a government of national unity would also be a partner for the international community in the effort to relaunch the peace process. We underline the importance of preserving and strengthening the capacity of the institutions of the Palestinian Authority and express our readiness to provide enhanced support to a Palestinian government that the EU can engage with.

The European Union remains deeply concerned at the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza and the West Bank and recalls its commitment to help the Palestinian people. We reiterate our call on Israel for the immediate resumption of transfers of withheld Palestinian tax and customs revenues. We encourage donors and others to make full use of the temporary international mechanism.

The European Union emphasizes the importance of the implementation of the Agreement of Movement and Access of November 2005. We call on Israel as well to respect previous agreements and to fulfil its obligations under them. We insist on the particular importance of regular operations at Gaza crossings, notably at the Rafah crossing, and call on Israel to do its utmost to ensure that the crossings be opened and that they remain open.

On Lebanon, the European Union encourages all Lebanese parties to reach consensus and to resume the process of national dialogue. We continue to be committed to supporting the legitimate and democratically elected Lebanese Government and its efforts to stabilize the situation in the country and maintain its unity. In that regard, the EU fully supports the reconstruction process in the perspective of the Paris conference in January 2007. The European Union reiterates its call for the immediate release of the two abducted Israeli soldiers. We renew our determination to support the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), and call on all parties in the region to comply with the resolution, especially the arms embargo.

Lebanon's sovereignty over its land, sea and airspace must be respected by all. The European Union urges Israel to stop violations of Lebanese airspace by the Israeli air force. We welcome the deployment of troops of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and of the Lebanese armed forces, which is progressing well.

We call on countries in the region to refrain from any interference in Lebanon's internal affairs, in accordance with Security Council resolutions, and to provide firm support to Lebanon's Government in reconstruction efforts.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Malmierca Díaz (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari for the information he has given us. As he himself has said, in the time that has passed since the Council held a meeting similar to this one, on 19 October 2006, the situation has not improved in the Middle East, and especially in occupied Palestinian territory — quite to the contrary. The assassination of Lebanon's Minister for Industry is fresh evidence of that fact. We condemn that act and extend our sincere condolences to the Government and people of Lebanon and to the family of the Minister.

As the Non-Aligned Movement has set out in recent statements, the ongoing deterioration of the

situation in occupied Palestinian territory is a matter of concern, especially as a result of the disproportionate, indiscriminate and excessive use of force by Israel, which has resulted in great loss of life and injuries to Palestinian civilians.

Despite the continuing deterioration of the situation, including the terrible massacre that took place in Beit Hanoun on 8 November 2006, the Security Council has not been able to act and continues to fail to fulfil its responsibilities for the maintenance of international peace and security. As we know, on 11 November 2006, the United States cast its thirty-first veto in connection with a text having to do with the question of the Middle East. The draft resolution in question was a balanced document introduced at the Council by the delegation of Qatar on behalf of the Arab Group. The draft resolution failed owing to that veto, despite the fact that it received a favourable vote from the majority of the Security Council, including all the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement that are currently members of the Council. The Council's inaction seriously affects not only its already diminished credibility; it also strengthens the Israeli Government's sense of impunity, which feels fully protected by the unjustifiable United States veto.

In the face of the Security Council's paralysis resulting from the abuse of the veto, there was no alternative but to go to the General Assembly, a forum in which we all participate on an equal footing and where there is no place for the anti-democratic and obsolete right of veto.

By an overwhelming majority, the Assembly adopted, at its resumed tenth emergency special session, a resolution setting out specific measures. Cuba calls for the immediate and full implementation of that resolution in all its aspects, including the dispatch by the Secretary-General of a fact-finding mission on the attack that took place in Beit Hanoun, with a view to informing the General Assembly within a 30-day period.

The Security Council cannot continue to remain idle in the face of Israel's flagrant violations of its resolutions. It is unacceptable for this organ to continue to shirk its ongoing responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine while this issue has not been resolved in all its aspects on the basis of international law.

The Security Council must immediately adopt the measures necessary for Israel to put an end to the occupation and to its illegitimate and illegal practices in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the illegal construction of the wall, which have as a goal to seize and to annex Palestinian land and property and to alter the demographic and geographical nature of the Palestinian territory.

Cuba reaffirms its commitment to a just and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to the right of the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and sovereignty in an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

We reiterate also our request that Israel comply with resolution 497 (1981) and that it withdraw from the entire occupied Syrian Golan back to the line of 4 June 1967, in compliance with resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Cuba welcomes the seriousness with which the Government of Lebanon has been complying with its obligations under resolution 1701 (2006), including the deployment of the Lebanese army in the southern region of the country and for its excellent level of cooperation with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be fully respected. The Government of Israel must comply with its obligations and immediately cease all acts of provocation against Lebanon, including the ongoing violations of that country's airspace.

I should like to conclude by reiterating the urgent need to put an end to the protracted and illegal Israeli occupation of all of the Arab territories occupied since 1967 and to resume the Middle East peace process.

In that respect, we would underscore the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative adopted at Beirut in 2002, as well as the recent call made by the Arab summit held at Khartoum in March to revitalize the Arab Peace Initiative.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Sadeghi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me to begin by expressing our deep sorrow and

condolences to the people and the Government of Lebanon in connection with the criminal and terrorist act that took place in Lebanon today. We were shocked to hear of the assassination of Mr. Pierre Gemayel and strongly condemn this heinous terrorist act. The fact that this criminal act took place on the very day when the Security Council is discussing yet again Israeli crimes and atrocities in Palestine and the wider region of the Middle East raises serious questions and concerns.

This meeting of the Security Council offers an opportunity to review the difficult circumstances and the gravity of the security and humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and the wider region in the light of the developments of the past several months, developments that have resulted in the cruel loss of innocent human lives and in significant destruction of the basic infrastructure in the Palestinian and Lebanese territories, in flagrant violation of international legality.

Recent rounds of aggression resulted in a display of more images showing the inherent dynamics of occupation, sustained by collective punishment, the indiscriminate use of military force and utter disregard for international human rights and humanitarian law. Given the nature of occupation, Israeli provocations are showing no sign of abating, as the occupiers are doomed to constantly planning further acts of aggression.

Consequently, while Palestinian homes and civilian infrastructure are completely at the mercy of the Israeli air force and artillery, the Israeli regime continues to violate resolution 1701 (2006), including through daily violations of Lebanese airspace and harassment of UNIFIL forces, as United Nations and UNIFIL spokespersons repeatedly report to all of us.

What we have witnessed over the short span of time since last summer is indicative of what generations of Palestinians and others in the region have gone through in the past several decades. Some wish to make it a routine matter, an inescapable fixture of the region. It represents the continuation of the established Israeli policy of using military force to dictate a solution to the rightful resistance that would be mounted by any people under occupation.

If we take history as a guide, we will see that no occupying Power has ever been able to force an occupied people into submission, and the approach that the Israeli regime is taking now has been tested time and again under similar circumstances and has always proved futile.

Likewise, all signs indicate that resistance against the occupation of Palestine has only been growing in ferocity and strength in the past several decades, and the result of the actions of the occupiers and those who support them has been more tension and turmoil in the region, with a growing impact across the world.

The tragedy of Palestine lies at the heart of the Middle East conflict. It is the major source of the anger and desperation that is being felt throughout the Muslim world. Israel's criminal acts against the Palestinians and other peoples of the region and their impact on the Islamic world represent the gravest challenge to global security. It is evident that full restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people and the establishment of a democratic Palestinian State with Al-Quds as its capital are imperative for the attainment of comprehensive and lasting peace and stability in the Middle East and beyond.

Peace in the Middle East cannot be achieved through aggression, State terrorism, intimidation or occupation. We are convinced that durable peace in Palestine and the Middle East will be possible only through justice; an end to discrimination and to the occupation of Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories; the return of all Palestinian refugees; and a democratic mechanism through which all inhabitants of Palestine, as well as Palestinians driven out of their homeland, would have the possibility of determining their future in a democratic and peaceful fashion.

Given the huge threat that the Israeli occupation poses to regional and international peace and security, it should be treated as the most important item on the agenda of the Security Council. As the Council has been seized of this matter for several decades, its failure to put an end to the Israeli occupation has denied hope to the people of Palestine and left them with no other choice but to stay the course of resistance.

Under these circumstances, there should be no doubt that those who impede justice and accountability for Israeli war crimes by repeatedly abusing the veto power bear responsibility for the bloodshed that we are witnessing time and again. They are also responsible for the undermining of the authority and credibility of the Security Council brought about by their actions.

The international community should not allow periodic Israeli military aggressions against an exhausted and defenceless civilian population to continue, as their impact on the region and beyond are growing increasingly severe. So far silence and inaction have been interpreted by the Israeli regime as consent, and even encouragement, for more criminal activities. The international community should firmly condemn and denounce Israel's scorn for international law and its contempt for the purposes and principles of the United Nations. More importantly, the impunity with which the Israeli regime carries out its criminal acts should be brought to an end.

The Israeli regime should be made to understand that it cannot continue to violate the basic elements of human rights and international humanitarian law in the Palestinian territories and to occupy Palestinian land with impunity. Its practices in the occupied Palestinian territories must be investigated, and it must be assigned criminal responsibility for the destruction that has resulted from its aggression. We hope that the efforts under way in the General Assembly will lead, inter alia, to an independent international investigation into the recent aggression in Gaza and its implications for and under international humanitarian law.

Before concluding, I would like to place on record the fact that my delegation rejects the baseless allegations raised once again against my country at today's meeting. Indeed, no one present here nor any other member of the international community needs to be reminded of how absurd those allegations are. None of us need to be reminded that no smokescreen can conceal the atrocities and the crimes of the Israeli regime in Palestine and in the wider region.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5569

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5569th meeting

Tuesday, 21 November 2006, 4.20 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Voto-Bernales	(Peru)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo	Mr. Biabaroh-Iboro
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Mr. Yankey
	Greece	Mrs. Papadopoulou
	Japan	Mr. Shinyo
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Williams
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Manongi
	United States of America	Mr. Bolton

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

06-62526 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 4.20 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Lebanon, in which she requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Ziade (Lebanon) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Following consultations among the members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council.

"The Security Council unequivocally condemns the assassination in Beirut on 21 November 2006 of Industry Minister Pierre Gemayel, a patriot who was a symbol of freedom and of the political independence of Lebanon. The Security Council expresses its deepest sympathy and condolences to the family of the victim and to the people and Government of Lebanon.

"The Security Council condemns any attempt to destabilize Lebanon through political assassination or other terrorist acts. The Security Council is gravely concerned by this assassination and its possible impact on ongoing efforts by the Government and people of Lebanon to solidify democracy, extend the authority of the Lebanese Government throughout its territory and complete the reconstruction process.

"The Security Council calls upon all parties in Lebanon and the region to show restraint and a sense of responsibility with a view to preventing any further deterioration of the situation in Lebanon. The Security Council urges all States, in accordance with its resolutions 1373 (2001), 1566 (2004) and 1624 (2005), to cooperate fully in the fight against terrorism.

"The Security Council welcomes the determination and commitment of the Government of Lebanon to bring to justice the perpetrators, organizers and sponsors of this and other assassinations and underlines its determination to support the Government of Lebanon in its efforts to this end.

"The Security Council reaffirms its previous calls upon all parties concerned to cooperate fully and urgently with the Security Council for the full implementation of all relevant resolutions concerning the restoration of the territorial integrity, full sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon, in particular resolutions 1559 (2004), 1595 (2005), 1664 (2006), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006).

"The Security Council requests the Secretary-General to continue to follow closely and report regularly to the Council on the situation in Lebanon. The Security Council underlines its readiness to continue to act in support of the legitimate and democratically elected Government of Lebanon."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2006/46.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on the agenda.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5570

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5570th meeting

Wednesday, 22 November 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Voto-Bernales	(Peru)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo	Mr. Gayama
	Denmark	Mr. Faaborg-Andersen
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Ghana	Mr. Yankey
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Bader
	Russian Federation	Mr. Smirnov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Mahiga
	United States of America	Ms. Wolcott Sanders

Agenda

Security Council mission

Briefing by the Head of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

06-62669 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council mission

Briefing by the Head of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Afghanistan in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Farhádi (Afghanistan) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting the Council will hear a briefing by His Excellency Mr. Kenzo Oshima, Permanent Representative of Japan and Head of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan.

I would like to welcome the return of the members of the Council and the Secretariat who took part in the mission to Afghanistan.

I now give the floor to Mr. Oshima, Head of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): I am very pleased this morning to present an oral report to the Council on the mission of Council members to Afghanistan last week. The Security Council mission, comprising 10 members, visited Afghanistan from 11 to 16 November. Based in Kabul, the mission travelled to provincial cities — Qalat, near Kandahar, in the south, and Mazar-e-Sharif in the north. The planned visit to Kandahar city itself, for a meeting with the governor of that province, had to be cancelled due to the prevailing security situation. On its way out, the mission made a stop in Islamabad for a meeting with senior Pakistani Government officials.

In terms of its movement inside the country, owing to security concerns and other logistical constraints, members of the mission travelled in military transport planes and, in some cases, military helicopters under heavy protection, courtesy of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) command and contributing countries. On behalf of the mission, I wish to express our utmost appreciation to the Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan, ISAF and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their support, assistance and hospitality during the visit.

In Afghanistan, the mission held extensive discussions with President Karzai, Foreign Minister Spantá and other key ministers, the newly appointed Attorney General, elected parliamentarians and provincial governors and other local leaders and elders. We also met with representatives of UNAMA, United Nations agencies, ISAF, the development community, the diplomatic community, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society representatives. In those meetings and in encounters with the media, the Council mission sought to convey to the Afghan and other interlocutors a message consisting of the following points, among others.

The first was to reaffirm that the Council will make utmost efforts to ensure that the international community will continue to support the Afghan Government in its efforts to attain the stability and reconstruction of the country, which is a long-term process and for which sustained commitment will be required.

The second was to emphasize that the Council highly appreciates the Afghan Government's ownership in the successful political transition achieved under the Bonn process that led, eventually, to the Afghanistan Compact, and that it encourages the Afghan Government to transform its ownership into further action for steady implementation of the Compact.

The third was to emphasize that a comprehensive approach is needed to address the multiple challenges facing Afghanistan, including the deteriorating security situation, corruption, human rights, rule of law, transitional justice and drug trafficking and cultivation,

so as to meet the legitimate expectations and aspirations of the population.

The fourth point was to affirm the central and impartial role of the United Nations in Afghanistan, including coordination of efforts in implementing the Afghanistan Compact.

The fifth was to encourage the fostering of mutual trust and the promotion of bilateral and regional cooperation between the Government of Afghanistan and the Governments of neighbouring and other regional partners, in particular the Government of Pakistan, as a matter of crucial importance in addressing those challenges facing Afghanistan and its neighbours in the region.

A full mission report is now being prepared and will be submitted to the Council after consultation with Council members. Following the practice, it will then be circulated to all Member States as a United Nations document in time for a public meeting on the matter, tentatively scheduled for 6 December. Today, as the Head of the mission, I wish to present my views and impressions on some of the important issues.

I shall begin with an overall assessment. This Security Council mission to Afghanistan was the first in three years, the last one having been in 2003. The Afghan partnership that began in Bonn in late 2001 and that continued through the Tokyo reconstruction conference in January 2002 and the January 2006 London Conference is largely on track. The consolidation of gains over this period in establishing and ensuring functioning democratic institutions and the efforts to improve the welfare of the population are moving forward, despite the inevitable fragilities and challenges that are clear to the country's leaders and outside partners.

Over the course of 2006, however — and this is a worrying development — the rise in the Taliban-led insurgency and other social ills including the upsurge in illegal drug production and trafficking, against the backdrop of still too weak and fragile State and provincial institutions, most notably in the public security sector and in the rule of law, and the accompanying endemic corruption and impunity — both real and perceived — have marred the post-Bonn phase and appear to have given rise to widespread despondency and disillusionment among the people. In other words, the confidence of the Afghan public in the institutions and processes appears to have been shaken of somewhat compromised, giving rise to a certain sense of backsliding. The increasing insecurity in parts of the country, particularly in the south and south-east, is worryingly affecting rehabilitation and reconstruction work done by the Afghans and by the United Nations and other international partners.

In the circumstances, it is important to stress two cardinal points: that the commitment of the international community for support of Afghanistan remains firm and sustained; and that the Afghanistan Compact, owned and led by Afghans, is and will remain the best strategic framework for cooperation between the Afghan Government and the international community, and that its steady and faithful implementation therefore needs to continue to be ensured.

Overall security is the major, number-one issue of concern in Afghanistan. After an upsurge in the number of security-related incidents in the country up to the summer of this year, there are, however, some signs that insurgent and terrorist-related violence, which plagued much of the year, may have begun to subside somewhat.

We were briefed by ISAF and told that armed clashes between insurgents and the Afghan and international military forces decreased in October and November. The insurgency is more or less confined to one third of the country, the south, south-east and east — which is still a very large part — while the remaining two thirds of Afghanistan are considered relatively stable. The security situation, however, remains precarious throughout the country, with the threat of suicide attacks and other forms of terrorism by the Taliban and other armed insurgencies and armed groups posing a serious threat to the nation-building process.

The insurgency and acts of terrorism must be dealt with, where necessary, through robust military and law enforcement measures. In this regard, I wish to commend the efforts undertaken by the Afghanistan Government, ISAF and the coalition forces, despite the casualties being inflicted on them. ISAF's expansion throughout the entire country now and its assumption of the leading international role in the provision of security, in the absence of reliable and strong Afghan national military and police forces, should be welcome. At the same time, it is important that the Afghan Government, ISAF and the coalition forces observe

international humanitarian law, avoid civilian casualties and respect local culture and traditions.

Measures must also be taken to address the growing frustration among ordinary Afghans. President Karzai has stated — and other Afghan interlocutors have echoed this view — that the Afghan Government's failure to show its capability to provide security, as well as other economic and social services, in the countryside, have increased disillusionment and contributed in part to the surge in violence. The lack of a capable police force and the widespread corruption in the ranks of State and provincial institutions are of particular concern in this regard, according to many of our interlocutors.

The President also conceded that the continued influence and tolerance of the activities of warlords had also contributed to the loss of faith by the Afghan people.

All interlocutors pointed out the seriousness of the narcotics issue, which, according to President Karzai, is a direct result of the desperation of the Afghan people. It is necessary to address all these issues as a matter of the highest priority. The Afghanistan Government, with the backing of the international community, should take immediate and effective steps, with a view to re-establishing trust among the people.

My third point is that of reconstruction work. As President Karzai put it, Afghanistan had to start on its reconstruction, not merely from zero but from below it, with deep minuses due to years of conflict and the damage sustained by the country. Against this background, the efforts and achievements made so far by the Afghan Government and people are to be highly commended.

In facing the mounting challenges, as we have noted, the Afghanistan Compact remains the best framework for cooperation and promise. It is essential to maintain the principle that Afghans keep their part of the commitment in the Compact in fighting corruption, establishing the rule of law and building a culture of respect for human rights, especially women's rights. They must be encouraged to own the process and take responsibility at this critical stage of consolidating peace after years of war and misery in their recent history.

At the same time, it is abundantly clear that Afghanistan needs additional and sustained support and assistance from the international community, both for quick gains and for sustained progress over the long term. That is the other side of the Compact pledge, and without such support there is no guarantee that Afghanistan, with all the vast investment made by the international community — that is, the price paid, including in terms of human lives — will not slide back into conflict and become a failed State again.

In this context, the Afghan Compact implementation mechanism, the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB), is expected to play a key part. The mission members attended the third meeting of the JCMB, in which the first mid-term review report was presented and discussed. We agree with the views expressed by many participants in the meeting that the Afghanistan Compact should now move to serious action and consistent implementation efforts through the overall political guidance of the JCMB.

The next aspect I wish to mention is that of human rights. Members of the Human Rights Commission and non-governmental organizations raised concern over the negative impact of the deterioration of the security situation on human rights conditions, including in particular those of women. The Afghanistan Government, as well as the international community, must sharpen the focus on human rights.

As regards the issue of a regional approach, it is clear that the solution to the Afghan problems requires a focus on the regional dimension of the problems, whether in the security sector or elsewhere. The Second Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, just held in New Delhi following on our mission to Kabul — although it falls outside the Council's immediate mandate — is timely and of particular importance. Our hope is that this meeting and other similar initiatives will further strengthen regional cooperation for the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

The regional approach is particularly important from the security perspective. Fostering trust and cooperation between the Afghan Government and its neighbouring partners is highly relevant and of critical importance for peace and security in the region, as our many Afghan interlocutors repeatedly pointed out. While the issues involved here are complex and sensitive, we felt reassured by the comments of

President Karzai and Foreign Secretary Khan of Pakistan. The President stressed that Afghanistan wants optimal relations with Pakistan, while Foreign Secretary Khan repeated that Pakistan wants stability in Afghanistan.

This cross-border relationship needs close monitoring in following the developments in the Afghanistan situation. We were encouraged by both sides' willingness to work together for the holding of cross-border jirgas, as agreed by the Presidents of the three countries: Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States.

We reaffirmed the importance of the role of UNAMA, especially in coordinating the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact. I believe that UNAMA's coordination role should be further strengthened with a view to accelerating the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact. In this context, we give our full support to the ongoing expansion of UNAMA into the provinces.

We pay tribute to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Tom Koenigs, his UNAMA staff and other personnel who work on the ground daily, in the very difficult, insecure and highly stressful environment that is Afghanistan today. We thank them for their dedication. I wish to commend their tireless efforts and commitment to their mission.

Finally, I wish to express my own appreciation to all members of the mission for the cooperation extended to me personally and for their input in the course of our discussions with the Afghan interlocutors and others. I am particularly grateful for their patience during the travails of the mission, not least of which was travelling in military helicopters and aircraft wearing heavy flak jackets and helmets all throughout. I also thank them for their good company during the mission.

That was my short oral briefing. As I have indicated, we will prepare a report to the Council, with a certain number of recommendations for a full discussion early in December.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ambassador Oshima for his informative briefing.

On behalf of the Council, I should like to express gratitude and appreciation to all of the members of the Security Council mission, which was so ably led by Ambassador Oshima, for the manner in which they discharged their important responsibilities on behalf of the Council.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda. The next meeting, to discuss the written report of the mission, will be fixed in consultations with the members of the Security Council.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.5571

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5571 st meeting

Wednesday, 22 November 2006, 10.45 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Voto-Bernales	(Peru)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo	Mr. Gayama
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Ghana	Mr. Yankey
	Greece	Mrs. Papadopoulou
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Bader
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Mahiga
	United States of America	Ms. Wolcott Sanders

Agenda

The situation in Africa

Briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator

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06-62675 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Africa

Briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Egeland to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

The Security Council will now hear a briefing by Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Egeland: I have just concluded my fourth and final mission as Emergency Relief Coordinator to Darfur. I return with a plea from the beleaguered Darfurians for immediate action to finally stop the atrocities against them. For more than a thousand days and a thousand nights, the defenceless civilians of Darfur have been living in fear for their lives and the lives of their children. The Government's failure to protect its own citizens, even in areas where there are no rebels, has been shameful, and it continues. So does our own failure, more than a year after world leaders, meeting in this very building, pledged their own responsibility to protect civilians where Governments manifestly fail to do so.

When I went to Darfur on my first visit, in late June 2004, accompanying the Secretary-General, we saw a civilian population under attack, prompting the displacement of 1 million people. When I returned to Darfur last week, 4 million people — two-thirds of Darfur's population — were in need of emergency assistance. The number of internally displaced persons has risen to an unprecedented 2 million. Attacks on villages and the displacement of tens of thousands of civilians continue and have reached the horrific levels of early 2004.

Over the past three years the world has responded generously with emergency relief in Darfur. The achievements of the 14,000 Sudanese and international aid workers in Darfur, the world's largest humanitarian operation, have been nothing less than heroic. Against all odds, we have until recently been able to deliver relief to most of the affected. As a comprehensive survey showed in August, global malnutrition had been reduced by half since the height of the crisis in mid-2004, and mortality rates had fallen to 0.36 per 10,000 per day, well below the emergency thresholds. Seventy-three per cent of all Darfurians had access to safe drinking water. Moreover, 550,000 tons of food will be delivered this year alone.

But all of this is now at risk. Militia attacks and banditry have rendered more than 95 per cent of all roads in West Darfur no-go areas for the United Nations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). As a result, an increasing number of camps are cut off from adequate and reliable assistance; in some instances, all basic humanitarian services have had to be shut down. Large new militias are being armed as we speak, while none are being disarmed, despite the demands and measures put in place by the Security Council in 2004 and 2005.

As the women from displaced-persons camps told me in El Geneina, the youngest and most reckless receive weapons and are recruited into militias. Government forces, militias, a plethora of rebel groups and an increasing number of Chadian armed opposition groups roam around freely inside and outside the camps, spreading terror and fear. New displacement is also fuelled by cross-border raids by armed groups which receive arms and safe haven on both sides of the Chad-Sudan border, thereby rapidly pushing the conflict towards a regional escalation.

All of this is happening with total impunity. Large parts of Darfur are seeing a meltdown of law and order. The traditional leaders whom I met have lost their influence on young men and armed groups, and they complained openly that the Government armed the new militias as the rebels got new arms from abroad.

All of this leaves the situation in West Darfur, and in Darfur at large, closer to the abyss than I have witnessed since my first visit in 2004. The following areas need to be addressed with the utmost urgency.

First, we need an immediate stop to all attacks, the cessation of hostilities and respect for the ceasefire by all parties.

Villages, camps and communities outside the urban centres of Darfur are again being burned and looted. Women and children are abused, raped and killed with impunity. Just 10 days ago the village of Sirba saw three attacks by Government forces and Arab militia that resulted in innocent civilians, mainly women and children, being killed and injured. I met some of the victims in the hospital of El Geneina. A mother told me how she held her two-year-old daughter in her arms as the child was wilfully shot in the neck by an armed man despite her repeated begging to spare her daughter. The wounded child did, as I could see, miraculously survive and is now recovering in the good care of local Sudanese doctors. Neither the Government nor the African Union was able or willing to show presence or deploy proactively in Sirba before the massacre, despite repeated warnings by villagers and aid workers of the impending attacks.

Just as I left the Sudan on Saturday, two massive military operations started in the Jebel Marra and Birmaza areas in North Darfur. A dozen villages were attacked and looted, driving more than 8,000 more innocent men, women and children from their homes and leaving many killed and injured. In the Birmaza area, huge amounts of livestock were stolen and houses were burned, deliberately depriving the population of their means of survival. In Jebel Marra, where up in the mountains the nights are freezing at this time of year, the attackers systematically looted food, clothing and blankets. This means that babies and small children who survived the attacks might now freeze to death. Let us be clear: these acts are crimes of the most despicable kind. They are an affront to humanity.

Secondly, we need the immediate and lasting implementation of all freedom of movement guarantees afforded by the Government of Sudan in the July 2004 moratorium, the Status of Mission Agreement and the Darfur Peace Agreement.

The rampant insecurity, proliferation of arms and banditry on roads have taken their toll on the delivery capacity of an increasingly beleaguered humanitarian community. Our colleagues in El Geneina told me how they had been forced to evacuate all operations from the Dorti camp, leaving 9,000 people without any assistance or protection whatsoever. Without armed escorts, dozens of humanitarian vehicles have been hijacked of late.

Three hours after I left El Geneina, a United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) vehicle with two United Nations volunteers was robbed at gunpoint by men in military camouflage between the town and the headquarters of the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS); the car remains in the hands of the hijackers. Humanitarian workers are being harassed, attacked and even killed. Just three days before my arrival, a World Food Programme driver died from injuries sustained in one such gun attack.

If this trend continues, if the world's largest humanitarian operation falters and if the lifeline for millions of civilians collapses, the situation in Darfur will spiral out of control. We will see a dramatic escalation of human suffering and loss of life beyond anything we have witnessed so far.

It is not only the insecurity that threatens our humanitarian operations. It is also the wall of administrative obstacles that the Government has slowly but surely rebuilt both in Khartoum and in Darfur that is strangling our operations. A quicksand of endless bureaucratic obstacles consumes most of the time of humanitarian relief managers. Some NGOs have half of their staff paralysed due to the lack of visas, work permits, stay permits or travel permits, or to any number of other obstacles. While all agencies and nationalities suffer from this, non-governmental organizations are targeted in particular — and United States aid workers as well. The United States has been by far our largest donor to the humanitarian operations in Darfur. Now 26 of 40 American NGO workers have been blocked from doing their relief work.

Relief workers of all nationalities have to be granted full access. The same is true for the journalists who cover our work and who report back to the donor communities about it. Two American journalists were blocked from travelling with me to Darfur. This is part of the wider effort by the Government to restrict access and reporting on Darfur by international and national journalists. Journalists have been detained, threatened with expulsion and harassed by a multitude of

Government authorities, particularly from the national security sector.

In brief, the moratorium on restrictions on aid operations in Darfur remains in place only in theory at the moment, as it is being completely undermined by the daily reality. This reality is summarized in the fact sheet before the Council, which I also shared with senior Government officials in Khartoum and in Darfur. I urge Council members to pursue these issues with the Government of the Sudan here in New York, in Khartoum and through other channels. These are not just bureaucratic issues. They threaten our entire relief operation.

The Council has previously spoken out in favour of one of the most established and respected NGOs that had been suspended by the Government before: the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). On top of its most recent suspension, the NRC has now received several letters confirming its complete expulsion from South Darfur. One letter demanded that the NRC immediately hand over all its assets to the Government. That would amount to confiscation of international property. The NRC has provided important services to several hundred thousand internally displaced persons (IDP) in South Darfur. Its expulsion and treatment should be protested by the Council and by members' representatives in Khartoum.

I was personally blocked by Sudanese national security officials from going to four out of six locations that I had previously agreed upon for my visit with the Government. I had intended to visit the Jebel Marra to send a strong message to the rebels to immediately stop the hostilities and support the ceasefire. My visit to Tawilla was to highlight the successful local work of AMIS, and my meeting with Musa Hilal, the Arab militia leader, was to protest attacks against the civilian population. Every one of those visits was blocked.

Each time I have travelled to the Sudan I have hoped to see a fundamental change in the attitude of the Government, an attitude that has been characterized by denial, neglect and the blaming of others. Yet again this time, I saw no such change, but rather a further entrenching of that attitude. Senior Government officials continue to deny the killings, the displacements and the rape of women.

My message to the Government, both in Khartoum and in West Darfur was, and is, "Help us to help your people; do not undermine our effectiveness; too many lives are at stake". I was pleased to receive verbal assurances from the Minister for Humanitarian Affairs that the moratorium on restrictions will be extended beyond the end of this year. However, six weeks before the moratorium is due to expire, that extension has yet to be formally announced to our aid agencies on the ground. I also agreed with the Minister to convene an in-depth review of working conditions for humanitarian organizations. At long last, that process started this morning with a constructive meeting with the humanitarian affairs commissioner. A technical committee with the line ministries, the United Nations and, if they so desire, NGOs will now address all current restrictions.

The next weeks may be a make-or-break period for our lifeline to more than 3 million people. This period may well be the last opportunity for the Council, the Government of the Sudan, the African Union, the rebels and all of us to avert a humanitarian disaster of much larger proportions than even the one we have witnessed in Darfur thus far. I hope that the agreement reached in Addis Ababa, on which the Secretary-General will brief the Council this afternoon, will mark a historic turning point to something better. As humanitarians, we pin high expectations on this agreement on a re-energized peace process, a strengthened ceasefire and effective peacekeeping.

Our fear is that time is now being lost in talks regarding the intricacies of the African Union/United Nations partnership rather than on the immediate deployment of a more effective force with a more proactive mandate. From my humanitarian perspective, the expectations for the force are as follows. It must have the mandate, resources, capabilities and willingness to deploy proactively to areas of risk for civilian populations, show presence where needed and protect civilian populations from attack and abhorrent acts of rape and sexual violence. It must be able to remain among the people when attacks are imminent. It must be able to investigate and report violations expeditiously. It must have the flexibility and mobility to respond to urgent requests for help from communities under threat — as should have been the case in Sirba, Birmaza and the Jebel Marra over the last 10 days alone. It must restart escorts of, or have a presence among, women and girls during the collection of firewood. If requested, it must be capable of facilitating the escort or protection of humanitarian

staff, assets and transports, including by patrolling key humanitarian corridors and access roads. And it must resolutely confront and address attempts to restrict their operational space or to impose restrictions on its monitoring or protection activities.

We all know that it may take months for such forces to be deployed. The Darfurians cannot wait another day. We therefore need the attacks to stop now.

Allow me also to make a few comments on the other part of my mission, regarding the Juba peace talks between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). I would like to thank the Council for its latest presidential statement on these talks (S/PRST/2006/45), as I believe that the current African-led peace mediation efforts in Juba provide a unique opportunity to bring the 20-year conflict with the LRA to an end. Except for small incidents, the cessation of hostilities has been respected, allowing hundreds of thousands of IDPs to start to return in northern Uganda. The hopes of millions of Ugandans rest on the outcomes at Juba.

At the same time, I was struck by the vulnerability of the peace process, which has made little substantial progress since the cessation of hostilities agreement in August. United Nations fund-raising for, and facilitation of, the peace talks was seen as critically important by all concerned. To date, six donors have committed $4.7 million to the Juba Initiative Project of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), while more are in the process of doing so. A good partnership between the Department for Political Affairs and OCHA in support of the Southern Sudanese mediation has been established.

Following his much publicized invitation, I met on 12 November with Joseph Kony of the LRA, his deputy Vincent Otti and other central commanders in the western assembly area of Ri-Kwangba, on the border of the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I was accompanied by the chief mediator, Vice-President Riek Machar of the Government of South Sudan, members of the peace mediation team, the Government of Uganda and representatives of civil society. Arriving at a clearing in the jungle after travel by air and by land, I was received by Vincent Otti, several members of his senior command and some 50 LRA fighters, many of them, seemingly, underage.

In our subsequent meeting, I urged Kony to move towards a speedy end to the conflict, to send senior commanders to the talks and to ensure the reassembly of LRA forces in the agreed areas. I reiterated our demand that they release abducted women and children and that they make a humanitarian gesture by allowing the wounded and sick to go to hospital. While, regrettably, still denying any abduction of children, Otti and Kony agreed that the LRA would indicate to us later this month the names of those who could be released into our care from LRA forces assembled in or around the eastern area of Owini Ki-Bul.

With regard to the peace process, both Otti and Kony complained about continued attacks and movements in Southern Sudan by the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF), which was preventing LRA forces from moving into the agreed assembly areas, in particular in the east. I raised that issue with both the mediation team and President Museveni in Kampala. They only marginally raised the issue of the International Criminal Court. I emphasized the independence of the International Criminal Court and stated that peace could not take place without justice. This morning, Vincent Otti told me by satellite phone that they are in the process of reassembling and that they will respect the cessation of hostilities. He also agreed again to revert to the issue of releasing non-combatants into our care.

In my rare meeting with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), I was struck by the continued paranoia among the senior LRA leadership. It will therefore be critical for the peace process and the eventual process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to build confidence among the LRA through regular face-to-face meetings with representatives of the mediation team and of the international community. It also explains the disconnect between the series of general political demands of the LRA mediation delegation in Juba and the rather more immediate interest of the commanders in security arrangements.

In Kampala, I debriefed President Museveni on my meeting with the LRA leadership. I urged him to give the peace talks more time and to assist the process by withdrawing UPDF troops from positions that would make it more difficult for the LRA to assemble in Owiny Ki-Bul. President Museveni emphasized that the peace talks should not be an endless businesslike negotiation and that all LRA must move into the two agreed assembly areas for the ceasefire to be lasting.

In conclusion, I believe that the Juba peace process is the best hope ever to bring this cruel conflict to an end. The time is now. We must not let this unique opportunity slip away due to a wait-and-see attitude.

In my view the following steps are critical to support the admirable efforts of the mediation led by the Government of South Sudan. There must be continued funding for the mediation effort and for the ceasefire monitoring through the OCHA-led Juba Initiative Project. There must also be continued United Nations political assistance to the mediation, led by the Department for Political Affairs (DPA). The efforts for the cessation of hostilities monitoring team consisting of representatives of the parties and the mediators must be reinvigorated. Representatives of DPA and OCHA will participate as observers, and UNMIS will provide much-needed helicopter transport for the monitoring team. More permanent facilities in Ri-Kwangba are also needed to provide an opportunity for more regular meetings between the mediation team, the Government delegation and the LRA leadership. Finally, immediate assistance to assembly areas must be provided to make the current stand down attractive. Caritas Uganda is now providing food, water and health care inside the assembly areas.

Those are all ongoing vital efforts that, together with the Security Council's continued political support, should enable the peace talks with the LRA to make further progress and the nearly 2 million displaced persons in northern Uganda to return.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Egeland for his briefing.

I invite members of the Council who wish to take the floor to so indicate to the Secretariat.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I thank Mr. Egeland for his sobering briefing and for his tireless efforts to keep the problems of Darfur and the problems associated with our desire to promote responsibility to protect at the forefront of the Security Council's business.

What he described was a very impressive amount of work on relief in the teeth of opposition on the ground. As he says, the crisis in Darfur has gone on far too long. Listening to him, I found myself horrified by the description of events in the camps and the attacks on civilians, but also mystified by the connection between the events he described on the ground and the political process that has been going on in Addis Ababa.

We were ready to welcome the agreement reached with the Government of the Sudan at last week's meeting in Addis and congratulate the Secretary-General and African Union Commission Chairperson Konaré for their efforts. But I would look forward this afternoon to hearing a little bit more about why, when the political process seems to be moving forward, events on the ground seem to be moving backwards. There is a linkage there that we have not fully got to the bottom of.

What it shows, I think, is that Thursday's breakthrough is fragile and that we need more elaboration on certain aspects from the Government of the Sudan. For the British Government's part, we will play whatever role we can in turning the Addis Ababa agreement into action. We look forward to the African Union leaders meeting later this month, and we hope that it will be able to endorse a concrete packet of measures that will contribute decisively to peace in Darfur. But as the Under-Secretary-General said today, unless they result in a change on the ground for the people who are suffering at the moment, those efforts will obviously be dissipated.

As I said, the situation that Mr. Egeland described, and its deterioration, are deeply worrying. It is hard to comprehend, given that everybody around this table and in the African Union has a desire to see the conflict ended and to have the humanitarian needs of the Sudanese people addressed, why fighting should be continuing in North Darfur, reportedly involving Government of the Sudan troops and air force. The fact that the attacks apparently disrupted a meeting of non-signatory rebel commanders discussing the Darfur Peace Agreement only makes it even more incomprehensible. We call on all sides to abide by the ceasefire.

Under-Secretary-General Egeland, you referred to the restrictions imposed by the Government of the Sudan on humanitarian agencies, which you experienced first-hand during your visit. We note the assurances that were obtained from the Government of the Sudan to extend the non-governmental organization visa moratorium to 2007. We urge the Government of the Sudan to deliver on those promises.

We also share your concern, Mr. Egeland, about the impact that the conflict in Darfur has on the wider

region, specifically on Chad and the Central African Republic. We hope that recommendations from the technical assessment mission currently on the ground will be made available to the Security Council as soon as possible.

I would like to turn briefly to northern Uganda. We are very grateful, again, to the Under-Secretary-General for his briefing and for the extraordinary efforts that he has made over the years to bring the humanitarian crisis there to world attention. The living conditions for the hundreds of thousands of people caught up in that humanitarian crisis remain dire. But the situation is improving, in large part because of the prospects for peace talks between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). It is all the more important therefore that those extra efforts to unblock the problems on the ground that the Under-Secretary-General described be pursued.

The presidential statement (S/PRST/2006/45) that we issued last week in support of the cessation of hostilities between the two parties needs to be followed up. We encourage all parties to work for a negotiated and peaceful outcome that is compatible with the wishes and needs of the local communities, but also compatible with the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. We welcome the support that the Secretariat and other parts of the United Nations family have been able to provide to the process. We would also like to note the work done by the Government of Uganda recently to seek to address the humanitarian situation in the north of the country, such as the development of the emergency humanitarian action plan and the draft peace, recovery and development plan now under discussion.

I would like to reserve comments about the peace process and Darfur and the African Union/United Nations force plans for our consultations this afternoon.

Mr. Gayama (Congo) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having taken the initiative to convene a meeting on this agenda item, at a time when the humanitarian situation has deteriorated in an unprecedented fashion across a good part of Africa, due to armed conflicts which are often associated with images and realities of a very tragic sort.

We cannot fail also to thank Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for the first-hand information that he has just made available to us. My delegation is grateful to him for his efforts to find solutions, which should be a source of inspiration to all of us in the political and technical efforts that we need to make in order to put an end to these situations, or at least to reduce their seriousness.

Obviously, the humanitarian situation, as it has just been explained to us, is sombre. Our optimistic assessments do not reflect the realities on the ground. As our colleague from the United Kingdom said, there seems to be a disconnect between the diplomatic and political optimism that has been expressed and the real situation — the situation as experienced, in particular, by displaced persons and refugees, who are the daily victims of acts of violence carried out for reasons that are unclear, especially in the case of Darfur and the Sudan.

As for Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army, we are happy to note that there has been a significant breakthrough with the implementation, on 29 August, of a ceasefire agreement, which was further extended on 1 November. This augurs well for peace and security in the Great Lakes region. However, we are waiting for the commitments made by the various actors to be translated into concrete actions. My delegation believes that the humanitarian issues relating to the women, children and non-combatants who are currently in the custody of the LRA will be resolved immediately and once and for all in the spirit of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005).

As I said earlier, my delegation is very concerned about the events that are unfolding in Darfur, where the prevailing conflict situation is threatening to destabilize the entire region. Eastern Chad — already burdened by more than 200,000 Sudanese refugees from neighbouring Darfur — is affected by the situation. An appeal has been made for an international presence to maintain security in that region, which also adjoins the Central African Republic. As Mr. Egeland has said, one of the most difficult aspects is the heavy price being paid by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and humanitarian workers, who are apparently being treated as persona non grata by the armed groups. That situation will require an extended and wide-ranging mobilization to enable NGOs and humanitarian workers to carry out their mission and to move throughout the entire region without restrictions.

Here, too, with respect to Darfur, the ceasefire, at least, must be complied with. The region must be able to implement the Abuja Peace Agreement for Darfur — if not in a comprehensive manner, at least gradually, by ensuring that the parties that did not sign the Agreement at least have the will to join.

Today, we are pinning our hopes on the outcome of the high-level meeting that took place in Addis Ababa on 16 November in which the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, took part. That meeting concluded that a joint United Nations-African Union force could be established to intervene in Darfur. We have waited too long for the implementation of such a formula to begin.

In this regard, we know that this afternoon we will hear more details about the situation regarding the Agreement. But we believe that at this stage, we have an opportunity — in the Council, at least — to try to implement some of the resolutions that we have adopted on Darfur. We will also have the opportunity to hear about ways in which the international community can support the African Union Mission in the Sudan, which is clearly overwhelmed by current events, the scope and multifaceted nature of which are such that there must be increased, greatly strengthened efforts on the part of the international community.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the African Union is still trying to convince the Government of the Sudan to join in the efforts that all the regional African communities are endeavouring to organize. In this regard, the African Union Peace and Security Council had planned to meet in Brazzaville, the capital of the Congo, on 24 November; that meeting will now take place on 29 November in Abuja, Nigeria. We expect important decisions to be taken at that meeting. We hope that the Government of the Sudan will give its consent so that we can give some substance to the conclusions that might be reached by the United Nations and by the African Union — the two organizations that are working with the Government of the Sudan. It is difficult to imagine that the Sudanese Government would not be able to respond to the ongoing appeals of the international community or that they could not give a positive interpretation of the fact that the international community is looking for a way to make the task of the Sudanese Government easier by giving people an opportunity to hope for a better life.

This is an interpretation that is shared by both the international community and the Government of the Sudan and we hope that, with solutions we could develop through political and diplomatic efforts, which are becoming more and more necessary at this time, that the heavy toll paid by innocent civilians, in particular in Darfur, will begin to mitigate.

Mr. Mayoral (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I too would like to thank the President for convening this meeting. I would like to welcome the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Jan Egeland. We express our gratitude and appreciation of his regular reports and we hope that we will continue to have these meetings in the future.

Having carefully listened to his statement, we have a few brief comments. As regards Northern Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army's (LRA) activities, we are encouraged to hear his positive assessment of the negotiations in the Juba process. At the same time, it is important to reiterate the message sent by Mr. Egeland and which is in keeping with the President of the Council's message last week, encouraging the parties to increase their efforts to put an end to this long and painful conflict that has included some of the worst possible atrocities against the civilian population. The peace process should be brought to a conclusion as soon as possible. The parties must respect the ceasefire that has been agreed and the LRA should immediately release women, children and non-combatants.

We would like to take note of Joseph Kony's commitment to respond with concrete humanitarian measures and to identify the sick and wounded in a reasonable amount of time. If the international community is to continue this process, which is the best hope for peace, as Mr. Egeland has said, it is necessary for the LRA to keep its word and for the Government of Uganda to develop a programme of cooperation for the north of Uganda with the full participation of the affected communities.

I would like to conclude, highlighting once again that one of the fundamental elements of the process of reconciliation is accountability for those primarily responsible for massive violations of human rights. We cannot achieve peace at the expense of justice. Novel solutions will have to be found to bring together the

typical structures of reconciliation of the local population with international criteria.

As regards the situation in Darfur, there is very little to add to the dark and sad picture that has been described to us. If the Government of the Sudan does not allow Under-Secretary-General Egeland to visit particular areas of Darfur in view of security considerations, we may wonder what this means in terms of the security of the millions of internally displaced persons who have been chased from their homes? What can civilians hope for in their daily lives? What prospects are there for them if the very Government that has the primary responsibility for protecting them admits that certain places, places where these citizens live, are too dangerous?

Mr. Egeland clearly described the terror that prevails. We now have to rise to the level of our commitment and do more to protect the population in Darfur. These people have no one. They have no one. We cannot allow more civilians to die under the pretext of legitimate self-defence. We agree with Mr. Egeland that the Addis-Ababa agreement, about which the Secretary-General will brief us this afternoon, may be the start in a new direction to turn this painful situation around and may bring some comfort to the population in Darfur, in particular along the lines of humanitarian assistance.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate our appreciation for the efforts led by Mr. Egeland to improve the situation of civilian populations. We value his commitment and we would like to reaffirm Argentina's commitment to the day-to-day work involved in protecting civilians in armed conflict.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): I would like to begin by joining others in thanking Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland for his comprehensive briefing. Let me take this opportunity to comment on the situation in the Sudan and the recent positive developments with regard to the situation in Northern Uganda. All the while, I would like to underline that the humanitarian situations in a number of other countries in Africa also require the close attention of the international community.

One of the purposes of these humanitarian briefings is to have an opportunity for early warning regarding looming international crisis. In this perspective, it is deeply disturbing that today we are again receiving a briefing from Mr. Egeland, which concludes that the situation facing the civilian population in Darfur is still largely the same as three years ago. Only today, we have over 3 million people dependent on humanitarian assistance, an increase of more than 2 million over the past three years.

The situation in Darfur is unacceptable and cannot be allowed to continue. A robust and efficient international force on the ground is the only way forward — a fact that has to be accepted by all. All efforts towards this goal must continue with a strong sense of urgency. The high-level consultation on the situation in Darfur, held last Thursday in Addis-Ababa, was a very important step to break the impasse with the Government of the Sudan regarding resolution 1706 (2006) and we look forward to being briefed in detail about the discussions at that meeting this afternoon.

The time between now and the meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council, to be held on 29 November in Abuja, must be used to intensify efforts to clear any additional issues standing in the way of our common goal, namely, to protect the lives of civilians in Darfur. We urge the regional Powers to stay engaged and to do their utmost to curb this threatening expansion of the conflict to a full-fledged regional conflict. All parties to the Tripoli and N'Djamena agreements must adhere to commitments made in these agreements.

Simultaneously, we must do everything possible to speed up the political process. Everyone with particular influence on key players must use their influence to the fullest. Broad acceptance of the Darfur Peace Agreement is a prerequisite for true progress and substantial improvement in the security situation.

On a much more positive note, I would like to welcome the cessation of hostilities agreement between Uganda and the rebels — the Lord's Resistance Army. The Juba peace talks represent an unprecedented opportunity to end the conflict, to bring a just and lasting peace to northern Uganda and to improve security throughout the region. We urge the parties to agree on a comprehensive settlement as soon as possible. We would like to commend the Government of the Southern Sudan for facilitating the peace talks and, likewise, to commend the Government of Uganda for the role it has played.

The negotiations will be difficult and setbacks are to be expected, but the international community should try everything to keep the talks alive by supporting the

mediators, by contributing to a conducive environment, which includes financial contributions, and by making sure that neither side will be given an alibi for walking away from the negotiation table.

To secure lasting peace, impunity must be addressed. As stated by Mr. Egeland, it is a delicate issue and one that will need our continued attention. The Government of Uganda must live up to its responsibility to find a solution consistent with its obligations under international law. The Security Council's adoption last week of a presidential statement on this matter (S/PRST/2006/45) is an important step in the right direction. We believe strong engagement by the United Nations will further stimulate the peace process.

Let me conclude by commending the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Mr. Egeland in particular for the active advocacy role they have played and they continue to play.

Ms. Wolcott Sanders (United States of America): I too want to thank Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland for his briefing on some of the continuing critical humanitarian challenges in Africa. We are grateful for his firsthand report on the initiative mediated by the Government of Southern Sudan to bring an end to the mayhem perpetrated by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). We also thank him for his report on the precarious situation in Darfur. We appreciate Under-Secretary-General Egeland's intensive efforts to draw attention to these problems, including the restrictions imposed on those trying to deliver humanitarian assistance.

The United States supports the Juba peace process. We welcome the 1 November 2006 signing of the renewed Cessation of Hostilities Agreement first formulated on 26 August. We urge adherence to the Agreement as a step towards a peaceful solution to the longstanding conflict in northern Uganda.

The United States is providing considerable assistance to communities affected by the conflict. This has included $71 million this year to address the humanitarian crisis, peace initiatives, rehabilitation and development needs in northern Uganda. Much of this aid is food aid. The remainder focuses on HIV/AIDS programmes, antimalaria initiatives, education, training, and improving agricultural productivity. We will continue to assist the region, particularly as the internally displaced population returns home. Pending a successful peace agreement, we will support reconstruction efforts as well.

We are pleased that the international community has begun using the cluster approach in efforts to address the humanitarian needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in northern Uganda. However, we believe better coordination is needed among Governments and agencies involved in these efforts.

Ending the violence in Darfur remains one of the highest priorities for the United States. We will continue to work closely with the United Nations, the African Union and our international partners to end the violence in Darfur, to hold individuals accountable for atrocities that have been committed and to ensure the delivery of humanitarian relief. We hope the consensus reached at the 16 November meeting in Addis Ababa will lead to peace and security for the people of Darfur.

The United States provides significant humanitarian assistance to affected populations in Darfur and to Sudanese refugees in Chad. We also have funds in place to respond effectively should current refugee and IDP populations dramatically increase. In the last fiscal year, we provided over $500 million in humanitarian assistance in Darfur and eastern Chad. We are supporting numerous non-governmental organizations and international organizations that are providing assistance. These humanitarian activities range from food aid to psychological assistance for victims of trauma.

However, we remain convinced that this is not enough. In order to end the suffering and save lives in Darfur, an effective peacekeeping operation, as elaborated in Security resolution 1706 (2006), should be deployed under United Nations command and control.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): We thank Under-Secretary-General Egeland for his briefing. We also thank him for his unstinting efforts to keep the Council informed of the humanitarian situation in Africa and in other parts of the world and to address the practical problems in a very aggressive and constructive manner.

First, with regard to the situation in Darfur, we are seriously concerned about the continuation of the conflict and the deteriorating humanitarian situation, as reported in detail by Mr. Egeland. Attacks on innocent civilians continue, and serious violations of international humanitarian law abound. We strongly

urge all parties to ensure the protection of civilians. In order to ensure this, it is all the more vital to implement steadily, without delay, the principally agreed assistance to the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) by the United Nations and others.

We recognize that the Addis Ababa meeting of 16 November 2006 marked an important step forward in building a cooperative relationship between the Government of Sudan and the international community, and we hope an agreement on the strengthened peacekeeping activity in Darfur will be reached through constructive dialogue soon. In this regard, we hope that the Peace and Security Council meeting to be held later this month will result in further advancing a political solution in Darfur.

We are also concerned about casualties and internally displaced persons (IDPs) newly generated by the intensifying conflict in Darfur. In order to manage this situation, we cannot accept the current situation, in which humanitarian assistance is being denied or access is being severely limited. The safety of the humanitarian personnel, as well access to the affected areas, should be secured.

Ensuring security is the first step for effective humanitarian assistance. The efforts to improve the humanitarian situation cannot be separated from the efforts on the political front — namely, securing a prompt cessation of hostilities, developing the political process, and putting in place effective peacekeeping activity. Also, it is vitally important for non-signatories to accede to the Darfur Peace Agreement that the Government of Sudan and the relevant countries are promoting. We strongly urge all the non-signatories to participate in this process.

For its part, Japan has worked with the Government of Sudan diplomatically through the dispatch in October of a special envoy of the Foreign Minister and also through the visit to Japan this month of Foreign Minister Lam Akol Ajawin. We will continue in our own efforts to work with the Government of Sudan to help bring about prompt political agreement and thereby improve the humanitarian situation in Darfur and consolidate peace. Japan will also consider positively further humanitarian assistance to the affected populations in Darfur.

With regard to northern Uganda, we commend the Emergency Relief Coordinator for his vigorous endeavours in assisting the peace talks in Uganda by meeting with President Museveni and the Lord's Resistance Army commander, Joseph Kony. Withdrawal of the Uganda Peoples Defence Force from the assembly points is a concrete outcome of these efforts, and we hope that such a withdrawal facilitates the implementation of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities Agreement between the Government and the Lord's Resistance Army.

Although the progress of consultations is slow, we commend the persistent mediation efforts of the Government authorities of southern Sudan, and we hope that the Cessation of Hostilities Monitoring Team will continue to oversee closely the implementation of the Agreement.

Although it is difficult to be optimistic, bearing in mind past experience, we need to continue to work towards the success of these consultations in order not to miss the opportunity for peace. The Security Council adopted a presidential statement on 16 November (S/PRST/2006/45), and we need to continue to pay close attention to the situation.

In northern Uganda, Japan has also provided humanitarian assistance bilaterally and through international organizations, including the World Food Programme and UNICEF. It is encouraging to hear that the security situation in northern Uganda has drastically improved in recent months and that the return of IDPs has accelerated. We intend to consider further assistance in order to push this constructive movement forward.

We wish also to encourage the United Nations, which has a presence in northern Uganda, to strengthen its support to activate the Joint Monitoring Commission and also provide detailed and continuous information on the situation — here in New York and on the ground in Uganda.

In conclusion, we commend the efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and in particular those of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Egeland, in aggressively dealing with the critical humanitarian situation in Africa and elsewhere in the world.

Mr. Lacroix (France) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting and also to thank Under-

Secretary-General Jan Egeland for his efforts and for his briefing.

I should like to make a few comments in relation to Darfur.

First, in terms of international humanitarian efforts, we are facing the threat of the withdrawal of a number of humanitarian organizations due to a lack of resources. The cost of operations on the ground is rising steadily, owing in particular to increased resort to air transport for the delivery of assistance. As Mr. Egeland noted, this is the largest humanitarian operation in the world, and its requirements are immense. We must therefore continue to support humanitarian workers there so that they can continue their work on the ground.

France would recall that it has already disbursed €76 million in bilateral and multilateral assistance for Darfur. Donors must continue their efforts, especially given that the hoped-for return of displaced refugees will also require targeted assistance for their reintegration, following the shock of having been displaced. In the early stages, they will have to be offered the same services as they receive in the camps.

My second point relates to our concern at the fresh deterioration of the situation in Darfur since September, in particular in the north-west. The situation, which was already tragic, is becoming untenable. There are a number of reasons for this: growing insecurity, continuing impediments to assistance, and the ongoing administrative restrictions on humanitarian assistance, which Mr. Egeland mentioned earlier.

In that context, my delegation would like to commend the work done in Darfur by the United Nations and in particular by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Thirdly, my delegation is pleased at the progress made at the Addis Ababa meeting last week as well as at the prospects for renewed dialogue on the question of Darfur. That meeting made it possible to reaffirm the common vision of the African Union and the United Nations. The two organizations are prepared to increase their efforts considerably in order to restore peace to the region and have adopted an original approach based on a joint commitment on the part of the two organizations over the long term.

The Security Council must ensure that the future peacekeeping presence, whatever its specific modalities, is able to contribute effectively to making civilian populations safer. My delegation expects the Sudanese Government to be diligent in dealing with the issues that arise out of the implementation of the outcome of the Addis Ababa meeting.

I should like also to make two key observations.

First, an expanded international peacekeeping presence can be fully effective only if the parties establish and implement a genuine ceasefire and resume the political process initiated by the Abuja Agreement.

Secondly, the Darfur crisis cannot be resolved without taking into account its regional implications in the Central African Republic and in Chad. We understand that this regional dimension was at the heart of the discussions that took place among the heads of the State of the region yesterday in Tripoli. We are also awaiting with interest the recommendations that the Secretary-General will submit to the Council in the near future regarding a United Nations presence in those areas of Chad and the Central African Republic bordering the Sudan.

On the question of Darfur, I would like to ask Mr. Egeland some questions on the issue he raised concerning the destruction of traditional structures. To what extent is that phenomenon widespread and advanced? How can the international community respond to the destruction of communities and of the country's economic fabric as a result of the conflict? Can those traditional structures, or what is left of them, serve, in some cases, as an effective channel for the distribution of assistance, or must we rely exclusively and directly on non-governmental and local organizations?

Finally, I should like to make a few brief comments on the situation in Uganda and on the Lord's Resistance Army.

First, France welcomes the renewal on 1 November of the ceasefire agreement between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). We also welcome the southern Sudanese mediation and the efforts made by Mr. Egeland to support it. The international community is now focusing on the two parties, which must translate into reality the hopes emanating from the Juba discussions.

France welcomes the improved humanitarian situation on the ground, the return of some of the displaced persons to their homes, and the establishment of a joint follow-up committee for the emergency plan.

The second point relates to Uganda and to non-combatants detained by the LRA and, specifically, to the situation of Acholi and Sudanese children who have not yet been returned to their families and whose early release is imperative. We urge the Government of Uganda and the LRA to cooperate fully with UNICEF and the High Commissioner on Human Rights, which are implementing on the ground resolution 1612 (2005) on children and armed conflict. We ask them in particular to elaborate, jointly with UNICEF and the High Commissioner on Human Rights, action plans for the demobilization of all children. Children must be a priority for both parties, as they should be for the Council, which must remain focused on their situation through the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Finally, I wish to emphasize, as several delegations did earlier, that the most serious crimes must not go unpunished. As Mr. Egeland stated, there can be no peace without justice.

Mrs. Papadopoulou (Greece): I should like to thank Mr. Egeland for his briefing on the humanitarian situation in Darfur and in northern Uganda and also for his intensive efforts, his advocacy role and his important work in the humanitarian field.

The mere fact that Mr. Egeland, the highest-ranking humanitarian United Nations official, had to cut his visit short because he was denied access to Jebel Marra, Tawilla and other areas demonstrates the complications involved with regard to humanitarian access. Four million people are in need of assistance, and such assistance must be granted to them. I agree with Mr. Egeland that now is the time to act.

In that regard, it is vital that the moratorium on restrictions on humanitarian workers in the Sudan be extended to and implemented in 2007. It is indeed very worrisome that certain humanitarian organizations, such as the Norwegian Refugee Council, have been forced to suspend their activities. On the positive side, we welcome the fact that the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs of the Sudan has agreed to work with the United Nations to lift the restrictions.

The agreement reached on Thursday in Addis Ababa must be used to make progress in the humanitarian sphere. Interpretations or misinterpretations of what was agreed should stop, and final agreement must be confirmed by the next meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council.

The re-energized African force should protect civilians and enable security for humanitarian workers and others. In that context, I consider the recommendation made by Mr. Egeland today to be particularly pertinent.

We support the Juba peace process, and we believe it constitutes a real breakthrough that could bring an end to a long and particularly brutal conflict.

We also consider Mr. Egeland's meeting with Joseph Kony a breakthrough. It was the first time that the international community had the opportunity to impress upon the leader of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) the importance of humanitarian issues. We hope that during the follow-on information expected today progress will be made in coping with the grave problems created by LRA actions in the area.

In our view, the most crucial issue in the months to come for northern Uganda will be to find a way to reconcile the need for peace with combating impunity and respecting the International Criminal Court process. In the short term, regional actors and the international community should spare no effort to ensure that resources are adequately allocated to northern Uganda, including for humanitarian efforts and for the sustainable reintegration of the population affected by conflict. In that respect, we commend the Government of Uganda for its recovery and development plan for the area.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): We too would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Egeland for his important briefing.

We are deeply concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Darfur and the increasing number of internally displaced persons (IDP) and refugees without humanitarian access due to new attacks and the criminal activities of armed militias in the area, including inside and around refugee camps in Darfur and eastern Chad. We are horrified by the news from Darfur about a new wave of violence against civilians.

In that regard, we deplore the failure of the Government of the Sudan to protect its citizens and to address the impunity of perpetrators. We agree with Mr. Egeland that all the necessary measures should be undertaken to stop all attacks and to re-establish the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities before an entire generation of young men is enlisted in the fighting, thereby increasing humanitarian suffering and escalating the conflict into a major regional catastrophe and confrontation.

We also call upon the Government of the Sudan to remove all bureaucratic obstacles to the continuation of the efforts of humanitarian workers and agencies that are helping to alleviate the suffering of 4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. We hope that the Government of the Sudan will understand that the cooperation and active engagement of the international community in addressing the crisis in Darfur is in the best interest of all the Sudanese people and citizens.

In that context, we remain convinced that a speedy and robust response from the international community is needed to help the Sudanese people and authorities address the deteriorating situation on the ground and to bring the peace process based on the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement back on track.

In that respect, we welcome the agreement on a hybrid African Union/United Nations operation that was achieved last week in Addis Ababa. At the same time, we call upon all stakeholders to continue to cooperate in a good and constructive spirit to resolve all outstanding issues, in order to deploy a credible peacekeeping force that is able and capable of protecting civilians and securing adequate conditions for the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement as soon as possible.

Turning briefly to the situation in northern Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), we are encouraged by the progress made in the peace talks between the Government of Uganda and the LRA, as well as in addressing the situation on the ground, including the improved humanitarian access to IDPs in northern Uganda. At the same time, we agree with Mr. Egeland that the active engagement of the international community is crucial and that it should continue to ensure that the Juba peace process produces concrete results in terms of bringing this cruel conflict to an end and allowing the nearly 2 million displaced persons i northern Uganda to return to their homes.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that w would welcome regular updates by the Secretariat o developments in northern Uganda. We believe that th Security Council must continue its active role i support of the peace process begun at Juba.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): A the outset, I would like to thank Under-Secretary General Egeland for his briefing. We believe tha Mr. Egeland's visit to northern Uganda and Darfu once again focused increased attention by th international community on the situation in the regio His briefing indicated that the humanitarian situation i Darfur and northern Uganda remains serious. Th Security Council should continue to pay attention t the humanitarian situation in those two region Moreover, we should intensify efforts to resolve th problems in those areas. The humanitarian, politic and security issues are interrelated and affect on another. The absence of the necessary stability makes difficult to fundamentally alleviate the humanitaria crisis.

Turning to the situation in northern Uganda, a adequate resolution to the question of the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) will have a major impact o the situation in northern Uganda and the stability of th entire country. China welcomes last August's signin of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities betwee the Ugandan Government and the LRA. We expect t see the implementation of the relevant provisions o the Agreement.

We appreciate the efforts of the Office for th Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to raise funds fo the peace talks and to provide assistance and suppo for the secretariat of the peace talks and the monitorin group on the cessation of hostilities. We hope that th Government of Uganda and the representatives of th LRA will quickly reach agreement on the releva political issues, make progress in the peace talks an achieve positive results.

China is concerned about the humanitaria situation in Darfur, the Sudan, as well as along th border between the Sudan and Chad. Fundamental alleviating the humanitarian situation depends upo restoring security and making progress in the peac process. We appeal to the Government of the Suda and the parties concerned to provide assistance an

access to humanitarian workers. Important consensus in that regard was recently reached at the high-level talks in Addis Ababa.

We are aware that the African Union's Peace and Security Council has also taken important decisions with regard to resolving the problem of Darfur. We hope that all parties will seize this rare historic opportunity to step up consultations and make progress on a proper and comprehensive resolution to the issue of Darfur. We also hope that the humanitarian situation will improve as the process to achieve a political settlement in Darfur is accelerated.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): I too would like to thank Mr. Egeland very much for his latest report on the humanitarian situation in Africa with a focus on Darfur and the Juba peace talks. We are touched by the commitment and passion which have consistently characterized his work as Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. He has inspired many to action, but, as he showed, many challenges remain and, in some cases, some situations have deteriorated.

The current situation in Darfur is reminiscent of what it was in 2004 and 2005, and it is getting worse. The Government's military actions and the activities of the militias have continued unabated. In some cases, they have continued with impunity. It is instructive to recall that in the course of 2005 the Security Council adopted two important resolutions to facilitate the peace process in Abuja and the humanitarian work in Darfur. The Council has an obligation to revisit those resolutions and try to create a new consensus to advance the peace process, to protect civilians and to assist and protect humanitarian action in Darfur.

The Darfur peace process was far from perfect and the Agreement is certainly not the best one. Its implementation prospects are receding. However, it is the only framework for a multilateral and multiparty solution. The Security Council, in partnership with the other stakeholders, especially the African Union, should try to rescue the Agreement. Short of this, it will give the Government of the Sudan an excuse for unilateral military action in place of recourse to a political process. The Council should be mindful of the need to work very closely with the African Union in order to see how the Peace Agreement can be rescued.

The African Union peace mission in Darfur is still operating essentially on the terms of the N'Djamena cessation of hostilities agreement and has not been enabled to engage in the implementation of the Abuja peace process. The mandate of the African mission in Darfur has been extended several times, but its operational mandate has not been substantially revised or enhanced. The renewed discussions among the African Union, the United Nations, the Sudan and other stakeholders in Addis Ababa should be an opportunity to build much-needed confidence to make a breakthrough in addressing the situation of the implementation of the Abuja peace process, or the Darfur peace process.

The security of the camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Darfur and the refugee camps in Chad need to receive special attention. As the fragmentation of warring parties continues, there is a great risk of these parties seeking bases in the refugees camps and IDP camps. This could further exacerbate the tense situation existing between the Sudan and Chad, and between the Sudan and the Central African Republic. It is important therefore that as we consider the overall security of the camps, we should also consider this regional dimension.

Under Mr. Egeland's leadership, world opinion has been sensitized to the situation in Darfur, as we see advertisements in major world newspapers and rallies around the world to support the cause of Darfurians. Mr. Egeland has mobilized resources for the largest humanitarian operation in the world today. He has encouraged coordinated action by United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations with the Central Emergency Relief Fund. The report on system-wide coherence in humanitarian action should further enhance coordination within the United Nations humanitarian community. The Security Council should provide the needed political support for these initiatives which Mr. Egeland started.

Turning to the Juba peace talks, we congratulate Mr. Egeland on his success in meeting with Joseph Kony and Vincent Otti. It is normally not very easy to meet with these kinds of people. It takes a lot of planning and courage. We hope that Mr. Egeland will continue to engage in dialogue with them, especially on the outstanding humanitarian issues, in particular the question of women and children abductees.

We have come a long way. This opportunity should not slip away from us again. These talks are qualitatively different from previous ones. Having the

Government of Southern Sudan as a facilitator makes a big difference. The involvement of the United Nations and the international community assures that these talks receive attention and the necessary support. There has to be peace and justice. The two should not be mutually exclusive. Impunity should not be allowed, but the issues have to be handled tactfully, without compromising the strategic objectives of peace and justice.

The international community should work closely with the Government of Uganda and all other stakeholders to address the humanitarian situation in northern Uganda, and also to contain the situation from becoming what it used to be in terms of a regional challenge.

Mr. Al-Bader (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): We would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Egeland for his briefing on developments in the humanitarian situation in Darfur and in northern Uganda. We would also like to thank him for his efforts to deal with the humanitarian situation throughout the area. It is regrettable to see the deterioration of the situation in both areas, as described by Mr. Egeland in his briefing, in particular the impact of this deterioration on women and children, the two groups most vulnerable to insecurity and instability.

In his statement, Mr. Egeland referred to the Addis Ababa agreement between the African Union and the Government of the Sudan and the positive impact of that agreement. We hope that the agreement will last and that it will make it possible for peace and stability to reign once again in Darfur and for the situation of refugees and the displaced persons to be resolved. My delegation looks forward to the Secretary-General's report on the agreement, which is to be introduced this afternoon in our informal consultations.

As regards the peace process for northern Uganda, we affirm the importance of Mr. Egeland's recommendations, in particular regarding the need to support and assist in the ongoing negotiations between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in order to attain permanent peace in northern Uganda. We also welcome the Juba peace process, which we view as the cornerstone of the ceasefire between the Ugandan Government and the LRA. We cannot fail to thank the Government of Southern Sudan for its mediation and for facilitating meetings between the parties.

Mr. Yankey (Ghana): I thank Under-Secretary-General Egeland for his update. I wish to commend him on his tireless efforts to ensure that the plight of the millions of displaced people in Darfur continues to receive the attention it deserves. We further welcome his positive assessment of the negotiations between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Government of Uganda and his recommendations in that regard. We share the view that without justice there can be no lasting peace and stress the need to uphold the independence of the International Criminal Court.

The Emergency Relief Coordinator has been very clear about the urgency with which the impediments to the delivery of humanitarian assistance must be addressed, even as the consultations on implementing the Darfur Peace Agreement and the related deployment of a peacekeeping mission in Darfur continue. The tragic irony about the situation in Darfur is that the flow of arms and those engaging in war crimes and crimes against humanity enjoy more freedom than do those engaged in saving lives. It is for the Council to draw its own conclusions about the motives and intentions behind the deliberate imposition of restrictions on humanitarian relief.

Mr. Egeland, who is very familiar with the daily reality in the IDP camps, has strongly emphasized that the time available to avert a looming disaster in Darfur is very limited. We must decide on the appropriate response. I have a question that is just a matter of detail. We are interested to know from the Emergency Relief Coordinator whether there are any up-to-date records on the number of deaths that have occurred in the IDP camps. In most reports one still sees the figure of 200,000, or sometimes 300,000. Are there any up-to-date records on the number of deaths?

Mr. Dolgov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We too wish to thank Mr. Egeland for his briefing, which as usual was very thorough, on the results of his last trip to Sudan and northern Uganda, and for his ongoing steps, together with his team, to manage humanitarian cooperation and to promote normalization of the humanitarian situation in those very complex regions. Of course, we would expect that the humanitarian activity of the United Nations, both in those regions and overall in the African continent, will continue. We support that activity, because it is a very

important element in promoting normalization of the situation and a political settlement.

There is no doubt whatsoever that the main reason for the unfortunate humanitarian situation is the fact that the conflicts are still unresolved. Mutual influence is the connection, for there is no doubt that progress towards a political settlement would have a positive impact in managing the humanitarian situation, whether in the Sudan, in northern Uganda or in other crisis areas.

With respect to the Sudan, I do not wish to pre-empt the Council's discussion later today. We are awaiting with great interest the statement by the Secretary-General on the results of the very important meeting on Darfur that took place in Addis Ababa. I just wish to say here that the agreements achieved there need to be strengthened and to be implemented appropriately, with the United Nations playing a very active role and with interaction with the African Union.

I do not wish to repeat what was said with respect to the characteristics of the humanitarian situation; there is no doubt that it remains very complicated. Without doubt the Government of the Sudan and all other parties must fully comply with their obligations in ensuring necessary access for humanitarian organizations and the safety of their personnel; they must cooperate with the humanitarian staff. There is no doubt about that.

It is also very important to ensure strict compliance by all parties with the ceasefire agreement. Unfortunately, we have seen a continuation of hostilities, and certainly that situation does not facilitate any advance on the political track. We would expect that any momentum provided by the agreement in principle in Addis Ababa will be further strengthened and will have a positive effect on the work of international humanitarian agencies in Darfur and on the humanitarian situation overall.

With respect to northern Uganda, I wish to support my colleagues in the Council in noting the need to continue the peace process with the successful mediation of the Government of Southern Sudan. Of course, all those humanitarian tasks that remain in this context, which are being resolved with useful cooperation by the United Nations, must be dealt with, and relevant efforts must continue.

We were pleased to hear that Mr. Kony has made the appropriate pledges that due attention will be paid to humanitarian issues, most of all with regard to returning to the United Nations all non-combatants being held by the Lord's Resistance Army. This is very important, and we hope that this matter will be resolved.

Once again I wish to say we deeply appreciate the work done by United Nations humanitarian staff and by Mr. Egeland personally. We take it that progress in all the areas indicated will be strengthened. The Council will of course continue to give all those matters the necessary attention.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

First, I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Jan Egeland, for the candid presentation he has given us. He depicted the tragedy, the fear, the insecurity that so many millions of human beings are suffering, victims of the crisis in Sudan. I wish to express to him the promise of Peru's unvarying support to him and to his office for their work in attending to crises of this type throughout the world.

I will start by discussing the situation in the Sudan, and more specifically in Darfur. We share Mr. Egeland's concern that the situation of insecurity in that area has worsened and that access to humanitarian assistance grows increasing difficult and risky. Confronted with this scenario, it is urgent for the international community, especially the Security Council, to take an effective decision that will protect civilians by intensifying dialogue in order to achieve an end to hostilities and the longed-for resolution of the crisis in Darfur.

We believe that in order to decisively change the direction of events in Darfur, the Government of National Unity in Sudan must accept the initiatives being discussed in order to arrive at a viable political process based on consultation and dialogue.

The Government must also accept the deployment of a credible and sufficiently large peacekeeping force with a robust and wide-ranging mandate with a view to consolidating the agreements reached at the political level, thus protecting the civilian population, which is victim of the rebels, the Janjaweed and the security forces.

As regards the Juba peace process, it is important to highlight the achievements made — in particular, the ceasefire agreement and the protocol. We hope that the parties will honour their commitments and that the calm that has returned to northern Uganda after so many years continues. In this regard, we join with those who have thanked the Government of Southern Sudan for acting as mediator in the peace talks. We believe that this process should contribute to putting an end to impunity for the serious crimes that have been committed. It must also lead to a situation in which the Ugandan Government, with the help of the international community, sets in motion an all-inclusive process to address the root causes of the conflict, in particular the extreme poverty and social marginalization of communities in northern Uganda.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

Mr. Jan Egeland has asked to make some final comments. I give him the floor.

Mr. Egeland (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like respond briefly to the comments of Council members.

(*spoke in English*)

First, on northern Uganda, indeed, I think that no one expected the talks to produce the kind of security improvements that they did produce when they started as an initiative of Riek Machar and the South Sudanese Government. But the reality is that we have had the best period in half a generation in terms of security in northern Uganda, and that one of the three or four worst humanitarian crises of this decade can be brought to an end. Hundreds of thousands are preparing to return in the next few months, if the ceasefire, or the cessation of hostilities, holds and we make further progress in the peace process.

That is why it is so important that you continue the tension, you continue the investment, directly and through the United Nations, in this process; it must become a priority of yours. We must make it as attractive as possible for the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) to stand down, demobilize, disarm and reintegrate, and we must make it as unattractive as possible for the LRA and for the Government forces to break the ceasefire and return to conflict. I think the conflict could become even worse than it was before. We should be under no illusions that the LRA cannot again cause terror across a large area.

On Darfur, the representative of Ghana asked about figures regarding humanitarian suffering on the ground. The most difficult figure is the one that we are frequently asked to give — the number of people who have died. Estimates range widely. The large-scale survey that we had in mid-2004 concluded that, of the 1 million people affected at the time, there were 10,000 extra deaths per month. Since then, the number of those affected has grown from 1 million to 4 million. Two million of those are displaced persons, and the other 2 million are people who have been severely affected by the fighting. It is impossible for us to give a figure of how many have died, except to say that we know that, within the camps, the humanitarian effort has been hugely successful and we are now clearly below the mortality rates of 2004. I mentioned that is the figure now — or was, in August — about 0.4 deaths per 10,000 per day. The emergency threshold is one per 10,000 — and it was above two per 10,000 in 2004, that is, twice the emergency threshold.

However, since August mortality has increased, malnutrition has increased and the crisis has increased. Displacement has increased. The number of attacks and the number of people killed has increased. And in each of these attacks — and I mentioned several — a dozen, or several dozen, innocent civilians are killed.

The number of refugees now in Chad is about 230,000, but the number of internally displaced persons in Chad has grown by many tens of thousands of late — it has grown even more than the number of refugees. It is so bad now in areas of eastern Chad that people are fleeing to Darfur. It has to be pretty bad in eastern Chad if people are fleeing to Darfur, given how it is there at the moment.

China observed, very correctly, that the humanitarian situation depends on progress on the security front and on the peace front, which the Council will be discussing this afternoon. Indeed, if the situation deteriorates further on the security front, if we do not make progress in the peace talks, the whole humanitarian operation could falter. That is my main message today. A lot is at stake. The lifeline to 3 million to 4 million people is really in danger for all of the reasons that I have mentioned.

What we fear now is that a lot of time will be lost before serious peace deals are made and before we get the security force on the ground that could protect the civilian population.

Today, the reality is that the women come to me and say, "Thank you for the blankets, thank you for the Band-Aids, thank you for our daily bread. But what we really need now is security. When night falls, there is nobody there. You are not there, as humanitarian workers. African Union soldiers are not there. Government protection is not there. There is nobody when armed men now increasingly infiltrate our camps or attack our communities."

At times, I have felt that perhaps the talks among those who can decide on peace, who can decide on security, should not take place in hotel rooms in capital cities, but should take place in one of the camps. Dorti would be a good case in point — that is a camp that everybody had to leave because it was so bad. The negotiators — those who have authority on all of these questions — should bring their families, their children and their wives. Then I think we would have much more progress, much more quickly, on all of those issues.

I would urge those who can influence the situation — the Asian countries, the Arab countries, the Islamic countries, the African countries, as well as the donor countries — to help to influence the Government, all parts of government, the rebels, everybody, to make concessions. There must be massive international pressure now on the parties, because, as was observed by several speakers, including the representative of the United Kingdom and others, there is a very real disconnect between what I saw on the ground and what comes out of many of the meetings, including the Addis Ababa meeting, which was a great success and where there was a declared commitment. The reality is that in recent days it has deteriorated. That was also the reality after the Abuja Agreement and the Abuja talks. This time it has to be different — we have to see a real change on the ground, and people must be made accountable for what they do and what they do not do, whether they are on this or that side. But, I certainly agree with Russia and others to say that of course the Government has a particular responsibility now to protect the civilian population, and the Government, as it now acts, is not doing what it could do to protect the civilian population of its own country, the Sudan.

The President *(spoke in Spanish)*: I thank Mr. Egeland for his presentation and his replies and clarifications.

The Security Council has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5572

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5572nd meeting

Wednesday, 22 November 2006, 5.40 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Voto-Bernales	(Peru)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Liu Junhua
	Congo	Mr. Gayama
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Mr. Yankey
	Greece	Mrs. Papadopoulou
	Japan	Mr. Kitagawa
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Qahtani
	Russian Federation	Mr. Leplinskiy
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Manongi
	United States of America	Mr. Brencick

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

06-62757 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 5.40 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of the Central African Republic in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Poukré-Kono (Central African Republic) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Following consultations among the members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council.

"On 30 October 2006, the Security Council heard Mr. Elie Doté, Prime Minister of the Central African Republic, as well as General Lamine Cissé, Special Representative of the Secretary-General. It reiterated its full support for the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) and for the United Nations staff in the Central African Republic.

"The Security Council welcomes the Government's efforts to revive dialogue through meetings with political stakeholders and representatives of civil society. It calls upon the Secretary-General to encourage, through BONUCA, the holding on a regular basis of such meetings, which are vital to restoring trust among Central Africans and promoting lasting reconciliation.

"The Security Council also welcomes the courageous efforts of the Government to implement the reforms advocated by the bilateral partners and international financial institutions aimed at improving the management of the national treasury, ensuring transparency in economic activities and good governance. In that regard, it calls upon the Central African Government to continue the reforms and dialogue with its international partners with a view to restoring economic growth and reducing poverty in the country.

"The Security Council is deeply concerned about the deterioration of the security situation in the Central African Republic, especially in the wake of the attacks on the towns of Birao, Ouanda-Djalle and Sam Ouandja. It expresses serious concern that instability along the border areas of Chad, Sudan and the Central African Republic represents a threat to security and stability in the Central African Republic and its neighbours, while noting that Central African defence and security forces are still unable to repel the armed groups in the northern and north-eastern parts of the country.

"The Security Council reaffirms its commitment to the territorial integrity of the Central African Republic. It calls for the adoption of a subregional approach to stabilize the borders of the Central African Republic. It urges the Central African authorities to expedite their efforts to restructure the armed forces and enhance their operational capabilities, and encourages the Multinational Force of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (FOMUC) to continue supporting the Central African armed forces beyond 30 June 2007. It notes that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has dispatched a fact-finding mission to Chad and the Central African Republic to assess how the United Nations might help those countries address the current instability. The Security Council looks forward to the findings and recommendations of the mission.

"The Security Council requests the Secretary-General to reinforce cooperation between the United Nations and member States of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) with a view to facilitating

and strengthening initiatives aimed at addressing trans-border insecurity in the subregion and bringing to an end the violations by armed groups of the territorial integrity of the Central African Republic. It also requests the Secretary-General to provide to it a report on the situation in the Central African Republic by 31 December 2006.

"The Security Council decides to renew the mandate of BONUCA for a period of one year, until 31 December 2007, and invites the Secretary-General to submit to it the new modalities of the mission of BONUCA for the new period no later than 30 November 2006."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2006/47.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on the agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.